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'If your brother becomes poor...'

A Critical Synthesis on the Aetiology of Poverty Based on Christopher J.H. Wright, the World Bank and Contemporary Scholarship

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**‘If your brother becomes poor...’: A Critical Synthesis on
the Aetiology of Poverty Based on Christopher J.H. Wright,
the World Bank and Contemporary Scholarship**

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ABSTRACT

In September 2000, the United Nations adopted their Millennium Declaration: a commitment to improving the lives of the world's poorest people. Of the eight Millennium Goals declared, the foremost one was to 'Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger', with a target to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than US \$1 per day. Many have attempted to address this problem, yet debate rages as to why some communities remain in poverty whilst others progress rapidly out. Dr Christopher Wright, a Church of England minister, contends that the root causes of poverty are indeed identifiable from Old Testament texts: natural disasters, laziness and oppression. While Wright presented a brief overview of this biblical approach, he did not elaborate on how it relates to contemporary theories of economic development, or whether it reflects the experience of poor people. This study therefore seeks to critically synthesize Wright's model with contemporary scholarship and field research.

We first evaluate Wright's assessment of the biblical texts and propose a small number of revisions that might be beneficial. We secondly assess four leading secular paradigms that provide an understanding of poverty causation – the monetary approach, capability approach, social exclusion and participatory methods – and critique them through the lens of a biblical anthropology. Using a Framework Synthesis, we then compare Wright's model against qualitative, participatory data obtained from participants in three Brazilian cities and gathered for the 1999 Brazilian National Report, a section of the 2000/01 World Development Report [World Bank] on poverty.

The results of our synthesis show that in many ways, the biblical aetiology is reflected in the spectrum of secular theories and the experiences of the interviewees. However, we saw that the model needs to be redrawn: 'natural causes' needed to be rephrased as 'disasters'; 'laziness' needs to be rephrased as 'failure'; and 'oppression' needed a larger emphasis on the onset of poverty caused when leaders desert sections of a community. We propose that this model is an appropriate critical synthesis on the aetiology of poverty based on Wright, the World Bank and contemporary scholarship.

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CHAPTER 1 RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Context

In September 2000, the United Nations [UN] adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration – a commitment to improving the lives of the world's poorest people. Of the eight Millennium Goals declared, the foremost one was to 'Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger', with a target to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than US \$1 per day by the year 2015 (United Nations, 2010). A snapshot of the world's population in 1990 showed that 1.8 billion people lived on less than US \$1.25 per day in that year. Regionally, this equated to 60 per cent of the Eastern Asian population, 58 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africa, 49 per cent of Southern Asia and 39 per cent of South Eastern Asia (United Nations, 2010 p. 6).

Many have attempted to address this problem. In 2006 alone, developing countries received US \$103 billion, bringing the total over the last 50 years to US \$2.3 trillion (Easterly and Pfutze, 2008 p. 1). Considering this extraordinary sum, the success in moving people from poverty and into security has been mixed. Encouragingly, the most recent UN estimates [2015] claim that the target of halving extreme poverty was met five years ahead of the 2015 deadline and that more than a billion people have been lifted out of poverty since 1990. Yet it is acknowledged that more than 800 million people are still living in extreme poverty and 795 million people are estimated to be undernourished – 90 million of which are children under the age of five years (United Nations, 2015). The largest success has been Eastern Asia, with China and India taking significant strides. However, there are noticeably stubborn pockets of continual underdevelopment, most noticeably Western Asia, parts of Central Asia and Eastern Europe – and perennially resistant sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations, 2010). In Africa, 50 per cent of the population in 2005 lived below US \$1.25 per day, a figure relatively unmoved since 1981 – despite Africa receiving over one trillion US dollars in aid since the 1960s (United Nations, 2010, Moyo, 2009).

Amongst leading secular thinkers, considerable debate rages as to why some communities remain in poverty whilst others progress rapidly out. Colombia University's Jeffrey Sachs argues that poverty is caused by 'Poverty Traps' that would only be defeated by a 'Big Push' of economic resource (Sachs, 2006), while his counterpart at New York University, William Easterly, contends it is the West's continued intervention by 'Planners' that actually limits growth potential (Easterly, 2006b). Oxford University educated Zambian, Dambisa Moyo, accuses gratuitous aid programs of

crippling the African continent (Moyo, 2009), whereas Harvard University's Amartya Sen points to a denial of certain freedoms and capabilities as both the root and result of poverty (Sen, 1999). With the underlying reasons for poverty so seemingly difficult to identify, it is little wonder reduction strategies are of such mixed efficiency.

Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University, Anirudh Krishna, makes an impassioned yet rational plea for going beyond merely identifying and measuring poverty, and seeking to recognize the causes of poverty:

Poverty is not a static phenomenon; identifiable causes help regenerate poverty. Concentrating not just on who is poor at a given moment in time but on why they are poor can lead to better designed and in fact better "targeted" policies (Krishna, 2007a p. 1950).

And:

While the identification of the poor is and should continue to be an important tool, there is a danger that it will be seen as the end rather than the means of poverty reduction. The risk is that once the poor are targeted and the benefits delivered, then the objectives of the program will be considered achieved. Unless this process results in sustainable reductions in poverty rather than temporary alleviation of hardships, it cannot be considered a success (Krishna, 2007a p. 1956).

We therefore seek a more compelling metatheory for why poverty occurs than those currently on offer. In *Old Testament ethics for the people of God* (Wright, 2004) – a grand, 520 page volume spanning the theological, social and economic framework of Old Testament ethics – Anglican evangelical scholar Christopher J.H. Wright gives a fairly pithy, 4 page observation and outline of his understanding of the causes of poverty according to the biblical literature, taking into consideration the various understandings that become apparent across the genres. He proposes that the Christian Old Testament [herein referred to as the Old Testament] classifies the causes of poverty to be natural causes, laziness and oppression (pp. 169-172).

It is these very observations by Wright that has inspired us to begin our exploration of the causes of poverty. Our study proposes to review and add depth to Wright's observation through a rigorous exploration of his supporting material. It will also investigate numerous prominent secular understandings of the reasons for poverty, comparing the two disciplines to see if there are significant correlations between secular research and biblical observations. Finally, it will seek to

include the voice of those closest to the issue – the poor themselves – to ascertain whether the theoretical research resonates with the actual human experiences. Triangulating the biblical and secular viewpoints with a compilation of interviews and surveys from individuals in Brazilian favelas will complete our critical synthesis.

The intended outcome is the development of a robust biblical framework through which to understand the reasons for poverty that can stand with academic integrity alongside its contemporary secular counterparts.

1.2 Research Questions

The fundamental question of this study is:

- How might we understand the aetiology of poverty following a critical synthesis of biblical, secular and participatory research?

This question will be answered by addressing the following key questions:

1. According to Wright, what is a biblical model of the aetiology of poverty? Are Wright's observations valid? What more can we learn by conducting a fuller biblical review?
2. According to leading contemporary, secular scholarship, what is the aetiology of poverty?
3. According to sample participatory data, what is the aetiology of poverty?

Chapter 1 is largely anticipatory and provides an introduction to the research, including our research focus, methods and value. Chapter 2 will then provide a substantial review of Wright's observations. As he offered only a fleeting report on his interpretations of the supporting passages, this chapter will generate a richer commentary on his claims. There will be room to make revisions and extensions to Wright's assertions should it be appropriate. This will engage with our first research question.

Chapter 3 will seek to answer the second key question on secular theories. We will first be providing a critique of leading secular theories: the 'monetary approach' [as formalized by the likes of Charles Booth, Seebohm Rowntree and Peter Townsend; henceforth 'MA'], the 'capability approach'

[primarily through the lens of Amartya Sen; henceforth 'CA'], 'social exclusion' [based upon the work of Tania Burchardt, Julian Le Grand and David Piachaud; henceforth 'SE'] and finally 'participatory methods' [led by Robert Chambers; henceforth 'PM']. For each we will provide the historical background, note the recognized suppositions and limitations of each, identify their key assumptions on the causes of poverty, and provide an appraisal of their contribution to the conversation through the lens of a biblical anthropology.

In Chapter 4 we will address our third research question by engaging with Wright's observations through the careful examination of sample empirical data on the aetiology of poverty. The data has been gathered from a World Bank participatory study across ten low-income areas in Brazil and will be analysed using a Framework Synthesis. Our rationale for using a Framework Synthesis and our methodological approach will be explained in the section, 'Research Methods' on p. 17.

By Chapter 5 we will be in a prime position to answer our key research question: what would a critical synthesis of this material look like? Here we will look for areas of similarity and crossover of ideas between Wright's model, contemporary scholarship and the sample data, referring to additional work by researchers in complementary fields where it is deemed beneficial. By the conclusion of Chapter 6, we will have answered our key research question and we will have formulated a coherent, academically robust and biblically-rooted model of the aetiology of poverty, adding an original contribution to the field of theology, which has been grounded in the social sciences.

1.2.a The "aetiology" of poverty?

We must be careful to clarify our title term, *aetiology*, which comes from the Greek term, *aitiologia*: 'giving a reason for' (Stevenson 2010). In our thesis, we are interested in 'giving a reason for' poverty – or more generally, searching for the answer to the question, 'why poverty?' We recognize that there are numerous words that could be used in the place of aetiology. Much of the literature seems comfortable with using a related term such as 'cause': Wright titles his section on the topic, 'The Causes of Poverty', and uses the straightforward statement, 'Poverty is caused.' (Wright, 2004 p. 170); Tim Keller, whose work is closely linked, joins him in using the phrase 'the causes of poverty' (Keller, 2010 p. 33), as does prominent Christian development thinker Bryant Myers (2011 p. 133). The World Bank's 2001 Development Report (World Bank, 2000 p. 34), the Brazilian

national report (Melo, 1999 p. 2) and other leading agencies including UNESCO (2015) also use the term 'cause'. It is true that some authors see a place for the term 'trigger' (Kiran et al., 2011, Smith and Middleton, 2007), which is perhaps more reflective of a one-off, temporary event. Some even include the term 'origin' as a means of describing the beginnings of poverty (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012 p. 436). For the purpose of our paper, the concepts of 'aetiology' and 'cause/causation' will be used relatively interchangeably as appropriate.

1.3 Research Focus: Christopher J.H. Wright

Christopher J.H. Wright was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1947. His academic biography includes the study of both Classics and Old Testament at Cambridge University, including a doctoral thesis on Old Testament ethics. He taught Old Testament in India for five years (1983-1988) at Union Biblical Seminary, and then returned to England to serve as the academic dean at All Nations Christian College, a missionary training school in England. He held the position of principal from 1993 until 2001. Wright is now the international director of the Langham Partnership International (known in the United States as John Stott Ministries), offering literature, scholarships and preaching training for pastors in Majority World churches and seminaries. An ordained Anglican minister, he also serves on the staff of All Souls Church, Langham Place, London, England. Wright's work has an excellent grounding in both the Church and the academy and can provide the sort of scholarship desired by us.

Wright has established himself as a reputable Christian author with a particular strength in Old Testament studies. His academic research in the Old Testament created a platform for him to unpack themes normally taught with a very heavy New Testament bias:

It had long seemed to me that the theme of Knowing God had tended to be handled either in a systematic or thematic way (as in the brilliant classic with that title by J.I. Packer), or in a purely personal and devotional way, largely devoid of Old Testament content. And yet it is clear... that Knowing God is a theme that could claim to be one of the more major concerns of the Bible, and particularly in the Old Testament (Wright, 2007 p. 11).

In response to this perceived need, Wright has presented a trilogy of books on knowing each member of the Godhead in the Old Testament. In *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Wright, 1995a), he claimed 'we will only understand Jesus properly if we see him in the light of this story, which he completes and brings to a climax' and that the 'major features of the Kingdom of God [as proclaimed by Jesus] already had its *moral* content from the Hebrew scriptures, with all the

range of ethical values, priorities and demands' already in place in the Old Testament (pp. 2, 251). In *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Wright, 2006) he made the case for recognizing the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Hebrew Scriptures, arguing 'if we want to have a fully biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit, as well as a biblically informed and biblically evaluated experience of his presence and power in our lives, then we need the Old Testament too' (p. 10). Finally, in *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* (Wright, 2007), he reasoned that our relationship with God as the divine Father did not just originate with Jesus' teaching, but can be seen throughout Israel whenever they used 'the role, expectations and responsibilities of human fathers as a way of speaking about certain aspects of God... there are fatherly portraits and metaphors for God, even when he is not directly called Father' (pp. 14-15).

Perhaps Wright's most significant addition to the literature has been in revealing the ethical implications of the Old Testament to the contemporary Christian. This becomes evident in his commentary, *Deuteronomy* (Wright, 2012), which centres on the inseparability of ethics and mission: 'the motivation for God's people to live by God's law is ultimately to bless the nations... there is a vital link between the religious claims of God's people (that God is near them) and their practical social ethic' (p. 49).

Wright's stance on Christian ethics is fully-fledged in the publication of *Old Testament ethics for the people of God* (Wright, 2004).¹ In it, Wright examines a theological, social and economic framework for Old Testament ethics. He then explores a variety of themes in relation to current issues: economics, the land and the poor; politics and a world of nations; law and justice; society and culture; and the way of the individual. However the major argument that Wright endeavours to communicate is his idea of Israel's 'ethical triangle' – the paradigm through which we understand the relationship between God [the theological angle], Israel [the social angle] and the Land [the economic angle] (Wright, 2004 p. 19). Wright deems these to be the three pillars of Israel's entire worldview and the standard through which the nation's theology and ethics met. By presenting such a paradigm Wright hopes to provide something 'helpful in trying to grasp the complexities of the Old Testament within a relatively simple and comprehensive framework that is nevertheless both

¹ *Old Testament ethics for the people of God* is a fully revised, updated and expanded version of the 1983 piece *Living as the people of God* [which was released as *An eye for an eye* in North America] and also includes material from *Walking in the ways of the Lord*. See WRIGHT, C. J. 1983. *An eye for an eye: the place of Old Testament ethics today*, Downers Grove, Ill, InterVarsity Press. See WRIGHT, C. J. H. 1995b. *Walking in the ways of the Lord*, Downers Grove, Ill, InterVarsity Press.

compatible with the shape of the Old Testament, and with the covenantal basis of Old Testament theology' (Wright, 2004 p. 20).

Wright applies comprehensive hermeneutical principles that take the cultural, social and political background of Israel sincerely, with the suitable recognition of the diverse genres in the Hebrew texts. The outcome is a biblical theology that is a lucid presentation of the message of the Old Testament, and one which has been cited over 150 times,² including favourable inclusions by both Walter C. Kaiser (2012 p. 231) and John Barton (2014 pp. 3, 41, 47, Barton, 2010 p. 108). It is also used as a key textbook by at least one university (Jero, 2013) and one seminary (Kreitzer, 2008).

In one sense, the portion of his work that we have chosen to unravel and expand upon is somewhat a micro-feature of his greater argument. Nevertheless, Wright's approach is of significant interest to us as it is the work of someone who has successfully proved himself in both academic and pastoral circles. We suggest that a model built upon an accurate reading of both fields could prove to be a highly appropriate and very powerful tool in our discussion of the causes of poverty.

1.4 Research Methods

We aim to triangulate biblical and secular scholarship with first-person data. To do so, we will need a specific type of data and a precise tool for assessing the data. In this section, we will provide a justification for the data and tools that we will use. In many ways our rationales will be anticipatory, as the justification for our choices will not become evident until later in the literature review.

1.4.a Requirements

The data set

As we will soon see, there is a myriad of data available regarding the reason for poverty and economic underdevelopment. However, we must carefully select what kind of data would best suit our research needs. We will argue that a true definition of poverty causation must have strong elements of both universality and subjectivity: universal elements that are consistent across time, geography and culture and are therefore an appropriate reflection on all humanity, yet allowing for

² According to data from Google Scholar. See, GOOGLE. search: 'Old Testament Ethics for the People of God' [Online]. Google Scholar. Available: https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?cites=1187442701849693740&as_sdt=2005&sciodt=0,5&hl=en [Accessed 26 January 2015].

enough subjectivity that the person concerned is ultimately responsible for defining their situation. We must therefore look for data concerning poverty causation that has come from the poor themselves, drawing upon their insights, understandings and beliefs.³ We will also argue that poverty is primarily a human experience that largely transcends quantitative proxies such as income and consumption. This means that we are looking for specifically qualitative data – records that are rich in communicating the spectrum of the human experience. We are less interested in numbers and more interested in descriptions and narratives.

We are therefore seeking data that is participatory [to reflect the voice of the poor], qualitative [to allow room for the richness of expressing this human condition] and from a sufficiently broad variety of sources [to make room for the possibility of universality]. We believe that this type of data would be best suited to our research necessities.

Ideally, we would be able to source this data ourselves – targeting the respondents that best represent our goal and framing the tools in a way that gathers the most relevant information – and therefore piecing together a significant portion of data from our own primary research. However, given the extraordinary amount of time, resource and specific skills – not to neglect the ethical considerations – required in gathering primary data of this sort, this type of research is beyond the capability of this project. We therefore accept that our study will be a secondary analysis of pre-published primary data, and we aim to source data that is as close to our requirements, and of a necessary high standard, to be included in our research. Such a secondary analysis has advantages and disadvantages, and these will be addressed in section 4.3.a.

In line with our requirements, we have selected to use data collected for the 2000 World Bank publication, *Voices of the poor: can anyone hear us?* (Narayan et al., 2000). This study was part of a global research effort entitled *Consultations with the poor*, designed to inform the *World Development Report 2000/1 on poverty and development* (World Bank, 2000). The research engaged underprivileged people in twenty-three countries around the world. Deepa Narayan, Principal Social Development Specialist in the World Bank's Poverty Group, instigated and directed

³ We accept that we are immediately confronted with a paradox of sorts: by asking “the poor” to comment on their circumstances, we have already applied external, objective criteria in our selection process. In perhaps the only way to engage with this conundrum, the final participants selected for our research were those who had been considered poor by their local community.

the research effort. Complete details on the sites, methodologies and processes involved in this study will be provided as appropriate in section 4.3.

The research method

We will see [in section 3.5: Participatory Methods] that much, though not all, of the literature concerning the poverty discussion utilizes quantitative data. We will see that from the early work of Booth and Rowntree, to the more recent Easterly and Sachs [section 3.2], the emphasis has been largely on gathering and interpreting such numerical data. Even Sen's 'capability approach' [section 3.3], which is firmly grounded in the quality of human life, typically resorts to quantitative data for support. We will argue that this is largely a result of the overly-dominant voice of economists in this particular discourse. However, as theologians rather than economists, we are intensely interested in the human experience and we align much more with the philosophy of Chambers and the 'participatory method', which favours rich, qualitative data over numerical facts and figures. We also favour the voice of those experiencing poverty over the voice of external "professionals", and strongly seek to base our writing in the experiences and voices of the poor.

Whilst quantitative research is focused primarily on numbers, qualitative research is very interested in words. Qualitative research orients itself from the viewpoint of the participant, though the researcher remains very close. The qualitative researcher is happy for the process to be reasonably unstructured in order to respond to the unfolding dialogue of the participant, and is looking for natural, rich, deep and micro-level data that unveils contextual understanding and underlying meanings in order to allow theories and concepts to emerge from the data itself. This is at a reasonable tension with quantitative research, which is characteristically from the viewpoint of the researcher who desires a structured and static process in order to gather hard and reliable data – frequently on a macro-level so that generalizations can be made more confidently (see Bryman, 2012 pp. 393-394).⁴

A qualitative approach is not without its critics however, and we would do well to be aware of some of the common pitfalls that can beset this type of research. Because of the unstructured process, open-ended nature and proximity of the researcher to the participants, the qualitative approach is

⁴ Alan Bryman is Emeritus Professor in the School of Management at the University of Leicester. His work on quantitative and qualitative research methods, including his publication *Social research methods* (2012), is considered to be a benchmark in the field.

often critiqued as being challenged in the areas of subjectivity, transparency, replicability and generalizability (see Bryman, 2012 pp. 391-392). Qualitative research can be at risk of relying too heavily on the researcher's interpretations of events, or of the researcher misdirecting or influencing the course of events. An implication of this is that qualitative research is often indicted for a lack of transparency [how does the reader know the exact steps of the researchers?], which makes the research difficult to replicate in other settings. Difficulty in replication also lends itself to difficulty in generalization – can we take our findings and generalize them across different populations?

To counter these critiques, we will use data from researchers who have adequately and appropriately communicated their selection, information gathering and analysing methods and we will strive to communicate our tools and methods to the reader, with the goal of reducing this accusation of a lack of transparency and over-subjectivity as much as possible. We also recognize that though quantitative research can provide statistical generalization to populations, qualitative research can provide cogent generalizations to theories. That is, our research should be able to provide at the very least theoretical inferences, comparisons and linkages between our studied population and a general theory, if not between our chosen population and other populations (see Bryman, 2012 p. 392).

Our research questions and previous assumptions therefore heavily favour the use of qualitative data. However, there are two important points we must bear in mind: firstly, we are interested in testing a theory or model to some extent, rather than just letting concepts emerge completely unguided, and secondly, we are interested in a degree of generalizability so that our findings might prove useful in other circumstances. It will be important for our tool of analysis to allow for these two exceptions, and we are confident that this will be possible.

The research tool

Our project must use qualitative data from a variety of sources. Therefore, our research design must include tools that are able to accurately and appropriately utilize this data. Methods for analysing qualitative data are a rather recent innovation and existed very little pre-1990s but have since seen a rapid uptake of interest, chiefly in the field of health and social science. As such, it has

undergone a continual process of refinement. Barbara L. Paterson,⁵ one of the key pioneers of qualitative data analysis, refers to the process of conducting an 'umbrella study' of qualitative studies as a 'qualitative evidence synthesis'. Expressed more fully, it is defined as 'the synthesis or amalgamation of individual qualitative research projects [commonly called 'primary research reports'] that relate to a specific topic or focus in order to arrive at new or enhanced understanding about the phenomena under study (both in Paterson, 2011 p. 1). In a way, it has followed in the path paved by meta-analysis, which could be reasonably understood as a qualitative synthesis's quantitative equivalent.

In addition to Paterson, there have been a number of recent reviews of qualitative synthesis approaches that prove helpful in determining the value and contribution of such research. Dixon-Woods et al. (2005)⁶ and Barnett-Page and Thomas (2009)⁷ both present a review of strategies for synthesis of qualitative research. They engage with the procedural, conceptual and theoretical issues that need to be addressed during the selection process, and their work will be drawn upon as we develop our research tools. Researchers occupied in this form of synthesis expect to be able to reveal more powerful explanations than are available from a single qualitative study alone, leading to a greater generalizability and subsequent abstraction of the research findings.

A qualitative synthesis is well placed to provide researchers with:

- the refutation or revision of a current understanding of a particular phenomenon;
- an exploration of differences and similarities across settings, sample populations and researchers' disciplinary, methodological and/or theoretical perspectives;
- the generation of operational models, theories or hypotheses that can be tested in later research;
- the identification of gaps and areas of ambiguity in the body of research, and

⁵ Barbara L. Paterson was formerly a Dean and Professor at the University of British Columbia and is now based at Thompson Rivers University. Through her extensive research, she has been at the forefront of developing quantitative research tools particularly when it comes to synthesizing large amounts of qualitative data. In the past two decades, her work has been cited over 1000 times in refereed journal articles.

⁶ Mary Dixon-Woods is the Professor of Medical Sociology at the University of Leicester. Her research focuses on development of methods for synthesizing diverse forms of evidence.

⁷ James Thomas is the Professor of Social Research and Policy at the Institute of Education, London. His focus is to develop methods for research synthesis, in particular for qualitative and mixed methods reviews.

- a complementation to the findings or interpretation of quantitative systematic reviews.

(source: Paterson, 2011 p. 2)

The overall purpose of a qualitative synthesis is therefore to generate more powerful conclusions from such data and this seems to resonate well with the requirements and aims of our project. In recent years, however, there have arisen numerous branches of this form of study, each with its own epistemological, methodological and terminological nuances. Paterson (2011 p. 5) suggests that more than a dozen such methods have been developed in recent years: aggregative method, Bayesian meta-analysis, Bayesian synthesis, content analysis, critical interpretive synthesis, ecological triangulation, formal grounded theory, framework synthesis, interpretive method, meta-analysis, meta-ethnography, meta-narrative, meta-study, narrative summary, narrative synthesis, systematic review, thematic analysis, and thematic synthesis are all examples of distinctive qualitative synthesis studies (source: Paterson, 2011 Table 1.1, pp. 14-17).

Our task then, is to determine which method would best suit our research question. Using the guidelines presented in Table 1.1 of Paterson, we narrowed our options to the four most suitable possibilities:

- i. *A Thematic Analysis* is the systematic identification of significant, reoccurring or most common themes in the body of primary research and summarizing these under thematic headings.
- ii. *Interpretive Methods* requires an inductive and interpretive process in order to generate a higher order understanding of the phenomena under study by generating a theory, model, or concept that overarches the primary research findings represented in the synthesis.
- iii. *A Meta-Ethnography* translates the findings of different primary research studies into each other to generate overarching themes, concepts, or metaphors, explaining contradictions, and develops a picture of the whole phenomena under study based upon the study of its parts.
- iv. *A Framework Synthesis* is a deductive approach that uses an *a priori* 'framework' derived from the researcher's previous literature review to synthesize the qualitative research findings. It produces a map of each key dimension identified in the synthesis and the nature of their influence and association with the other dimensions.

We see that each of these would have features conducive to our study. However, on further inspection we see that a Framework Synthesis would best suit the needs of this project. The first three methods [Thematic Analysis, Interpretive Methods and Meta-Ethnography] lean towards the identification of new themes, summaries or theories and are largely inductive approaches i.e. they move from a general observation towards the identification of patterns, the proposition of a tentative hypothesis and eventually the development of a theory. However, a Framework Synthesis is the only deductive approach: beginning with a general theory, stating a hypothesis, making observations and finally confirming, refuting or refining the theory. This suits our investigation, as we will be opening with a general theory (the model presented by Wright) and looking to observe whether this is identifiable in the data set in order to confirm, refute or refine Wright's model. In their critical appraisal of the various forms of systematic reviews that are arising in the literature, Gough et al. (2012), found that a Framework Synthesis was well-placed to answer the foundational question 'What are the attributes of an intervention or activity?' (p. 4). This resonates closely with our quest to find the attributes of the onset of poverty, and makes a Framework Synthesis approach an essential model to synthesize the data before us and answer our research questions.

1.4.b A Framework Synthesis

We have elected to use a Framework Synthesis approach to work with our data. The goal of a Framework Synthesis is not specifically to generate new data, or to just 'go beyond the data', but to describe and summarize the available data in the context of the given framework, and therefore positioning oneself to validate, support, review, advance or refute an established theory (see Carroll et al., 2011, Barnett-Page and Thomas, 2009). Framework Synthesis originated from Framework Analysis, but Booth et al. (2012 p. 135)⁸ suggests that a Framework Synthesis is the more suitable approach for using qualitative data. A Framework Synthesis begins by creating a framework of *a priori* themes and then coding data from included studies against that thematic or conceptual framework. Any data not included within the framework would then require further careful, iterative clarification using inductive, topical analysis procedures. The views of Barnett-Page and Thomas give us confidence in the suitability for this type of tool in our research:

⁸ Andrew Booth is the Reader in Evidence Based Information Practice and Director of Information at the University of Sheffield. His research interests focus on all methods of evidence synthesis, evidence based practice, and knowledge translation.

Framework synthesis is distinct from the other methods outlined here in that it utilizes an *a priori* 'framework' – informed by background material and team discussions – to extract and synthesize findings. As such, it is largely a deductive approach although, in addition to topics identified by the framework, new topics may be developed and incorporated as they emerge from the data. The synthetic product can be expressed in the form of a chart for each key dimension identified, which may be used to map the nature and range of the concept under study and find associations between themes and exceptions to these.

(source: Barnett-Page and Thomas, 2009 p. 5)

There are certain pragmatic advantages to this approach. The approach produces a relatively prompt, candid and practical process when compared to more exclusively interpretative forms of synthesis because a sizable amount of the data to be included in the analysis is coded against the *a priori* framework. The approach to synthesis is thus both positivist and interpretive; it employs the documented strengths of both Framework Synthesis and Thematic Synthesis. It diverges from other approaches to qualitative evidence synthesis in part because it uses an orderly method for identifying available frameworks, models or theories in order to construct the framework for the synthesis.

One criticism that might be raised concerning a Framework Synthesis is the necessity to prepare and work from the *a priori* framework. It could be argued that there is a danger of the researcher actually only finding what they have set out to find in the framework. In fact, those involved in designing the tool have recognized this in their preparation: 'Reviewers who have made a hefty investment in an initial conceptual model may be unconsciously motivated to recover the sunk costs of that model, and as a consequence tend to neglect evidence that presents a fundamental challenge' (Dixon-Woods, 2011 p. 2). This is not insurmountable, however, for in practice (Carroll et al., 2011 p. 6, Carroll et al., 2013 p. 7, Dixon-Woods, 2011) we see that a Framework Synthesis has indeed delivered its goal of raising new themes and content, which in turn has superseded the initial framework. In their conclusion, Dixon-Woods (2011) agrees that a well-thought model, a wide range of literature and being open to a wide range of voices can help avoid this pitfall and improve the legitimacy and validity of the approach.

Preparing a Framework Synthesis

In this section, we will make some brief comments and clarification on this method, making general remarks on how these steps relate to our project. Christopher Carroll,⁹ Andrew Booth and Katy

⁹ Christopher Carroll is a Reader in Health Technology Assessment at the University of Sheffield. His research interests include the systematic review of medical, health and social science topics.

Cooper¹⁰ are among the most prolific and prominent advocates of a Framework Synthesis, and in 2011 they conducted a study on the viability of using a 'best-fit' Framework Synthesis to study viewpoints of patients towards certain medical treatment [based on the collation and synthesis of 20 papers, see Carroll et al. (2011)]. At the completion of the study they concluded that the Framework Synthesis approach was indeed suited as a tool for synthesizing qualitative data, though they conceded that further confirmation would be welcome. Two years later, this core group [with some additions] sought to repeat the method when researching employee views on smoking cessation interventions (Carroll et al., 2013). Part of their objective was to refine the method and resolve any issues from their 2011 trial. At the conclusion of this revisited study, the authors presented what they considered to be the most appropriate method of conducting a Framework Synthesis. Their summary is shown here in Figure 1:

¹⁰ Katy Cooper is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield. Her research interests include the development of methods for systematic reviewing and evidence synthesis.

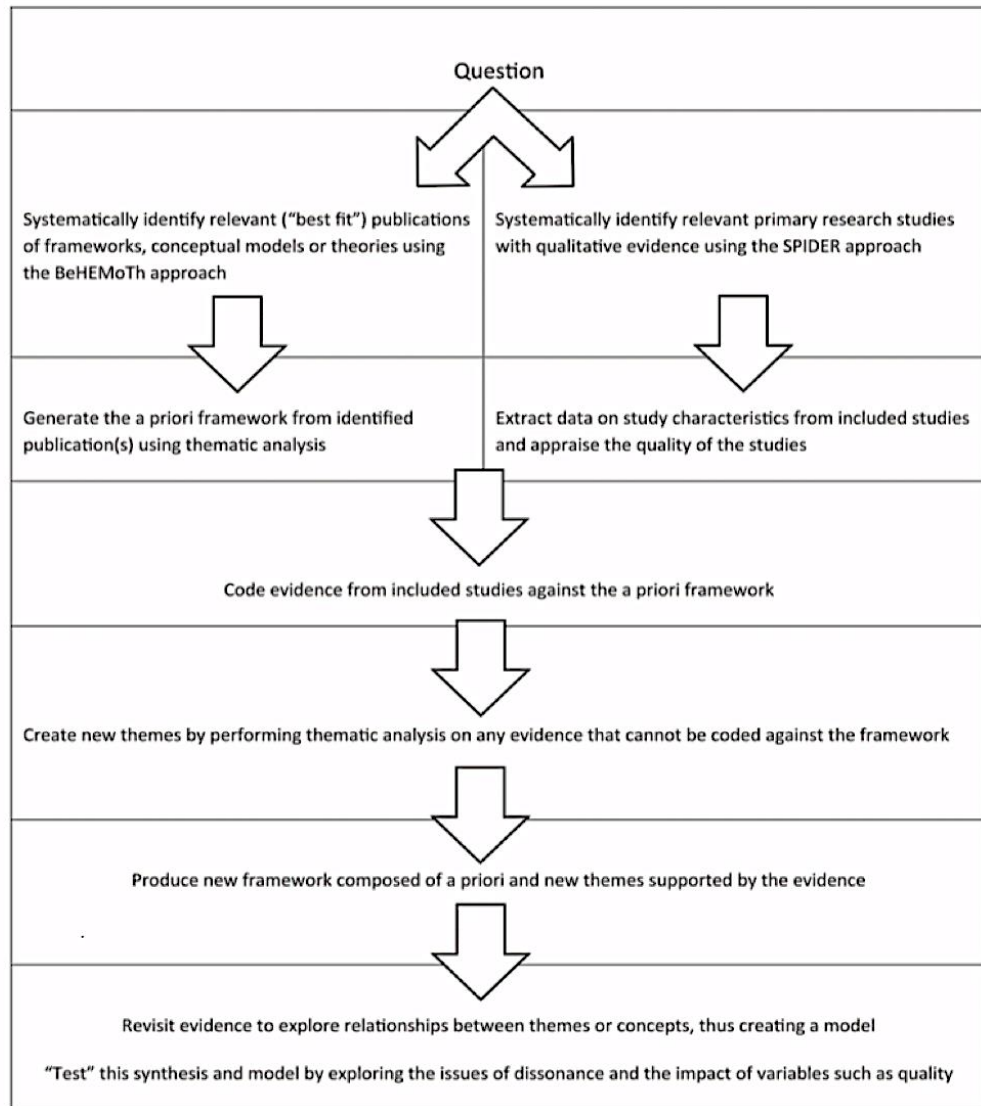


Figure 1: The Framework Synthesis process

Source: Carroll, Booth et al. 2013 p. 3

There are two steps in this process that are particularly relevant to ensure that the data is analysed as accurately as possible: the identification of 'best-fit' frameworks, and the identification of relevant studies. For the first, we are required to identify relevant frameworks, conceptual models or theories using the BeHEMoTh strategy [Behaviour of Interest, Health Context, Exclusions and Models or Theories]. This is a multi-stage, systematic approach to identifying relevant models and theories which is detailed in Carroll et al. (2013 p. 2), and the culmination of this process is the identification of key themes to be analysed. This part of the process will be dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4.

The second notable part of this process is the step of identifying relevant primary qualitative studies using the author's SPIDER method [Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation and Research type], as detailed in Carroll et al. (2013 p. 4). This requires us to use studies that are drawn from an appropriate population and setting; studying a topic that is fitting to our interests and using an appropriate research design. The studies must also be evaluated for their level of quality, preferably using published criteria to measure the design and conduct of each study, in order to remove subjective judgements. These assessments are useful to assess the internal validity of the studies, and consequently the validity of the findings of the synthesis as a whole. An earlier study synthesizing qualitative studies (Brunton et al., 2006) also details the steps taken for quality control, and we will take appropriate note of their comments. It is through this process that we identified the World Bank study as an appropriate source of primary data.

From this point the accepted studies are thoroughly reviewed and the qualitative evidence pertaining to the research is coded and matched against the framework. Any subsequent evidence that is not seen to match the framework is coded as a secondary theme. The initial themes and subsequent themes are reviewed together, and any necessary adjustment to the initial framework is instigated. Any new or recurring relationships or themes are explored. On the completion of this step, the researcher is positioned to comment on the accuracy of the initial framework and the suitability of the emerging framework. This will be the focus of Chapter 4, with the emerging framework presented in Chapter 5.

1.5 Research Value

The originality of this thesis lies in its endeavour to match biblical thinking with solid empirical evidence. A survey of the literature shows that there is very little thinking of this type in theological circles. In his book *Walking with the poor: principles and practices of transformational development*, (Myers, 2011), Bryant Myers [Professor of Transformational Development at Fuller Theological Seminary] showed a degree of despair when lamenting the dearth of robust evangelical thinking about development. He protests the lack of any clear case studies, serious evaluations, PhD inquiries or evidence-based research in the field of biblical development. Our original contribution to knowledge will be a step into this field and address this present scarcity. By addressing the key research question of 'How might we understand the aetiology of poverty following a synthesis of

biblical, secular and participatory research?’ we will be providing one such piece of evidence-based research that is of doctoral quality.

Importantly, we must readily admit that we are writing this paper from the position of pastor-theologian. Our foremost interest in all academic work is to foster the development and expression of Christlikeness in the disciples of Jesus, and to resolutely oppose any circumstances that prevent this from happening, including the existence of poverty. In order to do this, we will borrow from, and engage with, various alternate academic fields – primarily economics and sociology – as necessary. We trust that good theology and good scholarship can be mutually supportive and beneficial in achieving our stated goal.

If successful, the study should present a valuable meeting point between traditional academic scholarship of the Scriptures and the real needs of individuals and families in our country and countries around the world. We hope that the knowledge created here will make a substantive contribution to the theoretical and empirical work in the field, as well as helping churches, para-church organizations and governments address the needs of their citizens in a scripturally supported and practically effective manner. With thoughtful consideration, it might be possible for the world to continue on our path towards, and past, the first Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

CHAPTER 2 THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF CHRISTOPHER J.H. WRIGHT

In this opening chapter, we will conduct a review of Wright's model and in doing so answer our first key research question: 'According to Wright, what is a biblical model of the aetiology of poverty? Are Wright's observations valid? What more can we learn by conducting a fuller biblical review?' To locate our work, we will first comment on our use of Scripture, in particular the Old Testament. We will also comment on one overarching theme of Scripture – sin – with which any biblical study of the anthropological type must give careful consideration. To contextualize our passages, we will also preface our review with an overview of the sociocultural context of the Hebrew people in Old Testament times as well as the linguistic nuances of the Hebrew references to poverty.

2.1 Opening Remarks

2.1.a The use of Scripture

From the outset we must first identify who 'we' are. For the purpose of this thesis, 'we' are believers of the Christian faith, and of the Protestant position, who adhere to the orthodox teachings of Protestant Christian translations of the Holy Bible. We echo the words of Hartropp (2008 p. 6), when we say that this thesis accepts as fundamental the truth of Scripture¹¹ as being the written word of God and the standard of all truth. The Bible has authority towards us because it is innately tied up with us accepting the God of the Christian faith. As Barr (1980 p. 52) expressed coherently, our position as Christians is not equivalent to those who merely maintain the position of a theist; our position is fundamentally grounded in our belief in the God who has expressed Himself through the Christian Bible. The beliefs, traditions and structures of Christianity are indivisible from the revelation presented in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are not simply the foundation of the Church's academic theology, but they have also supplied our moral understanding, outlined our philosophic inquiries and fitted out our worship rituals. The Bible provides the Christian, and the Christian community, with the materials for their thought, expression and action, in addition to their academic endeavours.

Few would disagree that the Bible should be fundamental in shaping the ethics of a Christian and the church community. We uphold that the Scriptures maintain a station of authority from both a

¹¹ We have chosen to use the New American Standard Bible [hereafter NASB] as our English translation. The NASB is intended to be a literal translation, with the translators following the '...word and sentence patterns of the original authors in order to enable the reader to study Scripture in its most literal format and to experience the individual personalities of those who penned the original manuscripts'. All biblical references will be from the NASB unless otherwise stated. See THE LOCKMAN FOUNDATION. 1999-2012. *New American Standard Bible* [Online]. Available: <http://www.lockman.org/nasb/index.php> [Accessed 15 December 2013].

hard and soft position: it has hard authority because we grant it authority, and it has soft authority because it proves itself each time we put its teachings into action (Barr, 1973 pp. 27-29). However, we recognize that entering into a field concerned with ethics – and sourcing our guidance from just the Old Testament – could prove hugely difficult. In the opening remarks of his substantial piece, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Kaiser, 1983), Kaiser noted that in the hundred years leading up to his work, only six significant studies had been produced on the topic of Old Testament ethics, and only two of these were in English (Kaiser, 1983 p. 1). He desponds that the total literature is considerably sparse when one tries to avoid what he sees as ‘merely superficial’ writings.¹² This has led to what he considered an almost ‘Marcionite tendency’¹³ within modern Christendom when it comes to discussing Christian ethics. Despite this, it is evident from his writing that Kaiser still affirms the Old Testament’s relevance to Christian ethics, its authority for the Christian, and its ability to be handled somewhat systematically, despite its manifest diversity.¹⁴

Why then should we be interested in basing this study in the Old Testament? Most obvious, it is because the author we are primarily interested in, Wright, is an Old Testament scholar and has provided a model only based on Old Testament texts. Yet Donald Hay, the retired University of Oxford economist whose research typically covered the interaction between economics and Christian ethics, argues this might be entirely appropriate based upon the spiritual context addressed in the two testaments (Hay, 1989 pp. 69-70). When discussing objections to applying the Bible to contemporary social problems, he notes that many have objected to the use of the New Testament on the basis that it is primarily concerned with the actions of the Church: the community of the redeemed. He reasons that New Testament ethics are aimed at those in the Church who, by the process of a new spiritual birth, are being regenerated by the Holy Spirit and thus should be able to maintain a higher attainment of social behaviour. Old Testament writings, however, seemed

¹² James Barr also lamented that contemporary [at the time of writing] approaches to Old Testament study were displaying signs of both rejection and apathy in English-language literature. See pp. 26-39 of BARR, J. 2011b. The new crisis of Biblical authority. In: BARTON, J. (ed.) *Bible and interpretation: the collected essays of James Barr*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

John Rogerson, writing in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* in 2012, cites only three contemporary authors who have used the Old Testament to make significant contributions to the field of Christian Ethics: Kaiser, Wright and [non-English] Eckart Otto. See pp. 34-36 of ROGERSON, J. 2012. The Old Testament and Christian ethics. In: GILL, R. (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Christian ethics*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ This observation was first expressed by Davidson in 1959, and echoed by Kaiser in 1983. See DAVIDSON, R. 1959. Some aspects of the Old Testament contribution to the pattern of Christian ethics. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 12, 373-387. See KAISER, W. C. 1983. *Toward Old Testament ethics*, Grand Rapids, The Zondervan Corporation.

¹⁴ Perhaps Kaiser’s work has inspired a renewed interest in Old Testament ethics. Wright’s observation is that in the two decades following Kaiser’s piece, there has been an upsurge in scholars taking on the issue of Old Testament ethics. Wright provides a helpful survey on the more recent contributors to Old Testament ethics in his piece. See pp. 415-440 of WRIGHT, C. J. 2004. *Old Testament ethics for the people of God*, Downers Grove, Ill, Intervarsity Press.

to presuppose a low level of human behaviour in the community. Murder, theft, rape, divorce and bestiality are frequently addressed in the first canon, as they are directly appropriate to the actual tribulations of cultures composed of unregenerate people. Without dismissing the relevance of New Testament ethics, Hay's conclusion is that 'the Old Testament may well be more useful than the New Testament in providing examples of second-best applications to a people who are less well motivated to obey' (1989 p. 70).

The Old Testament writings also abound with opportunities to see the purpose of God for humanity and community. The 'Covenant Code' [Exodus 20:22 – 23:33] and the 'Holiness Code' of Leviticus in particular exhibit a strong concern for the needy, and an interest in the relationships between the poor and the wealthy. There is also a special appreciation in the social laws found in the book of Deuteronomy: as a foundational political document for the nation of Israel, it vocalizes an inherent concern for the plight of the poor and marginalized. Frequently using the Exodus from Egypt as His reference point, God also exhorts Israel to imitate His compassion towards the needy, to protect them and to become instruments of liberation for other people. In short, there lies at the heart of the Old Testament a concern for social and economic arrangements and their impact on the poor that is far more transparent than that which is evident in the New Testament.

If we affirm an appeal to the Old Testament in matters of social ethics, we should ask what method of study could provide the most favourable outcome? It would be prudent to see how Wright handles this topic. In one of his earlier pieces (Wright, 1995b pp. 13-14), he describes two common approaches for those interested in applying the Bible's voice in the area of social ethics. The first approach begins with a specific social concern and looks to the Scriptures for authoritative direction. Wright refers to this as the *inductive* approach. The researcher might be wrestling with the question of land rights, or a fair judicial system, and would approach the Scripture in order to plan a course of response or action that would seem in line with the text. There are a number of benefits with this approach. Firstly, it should be considered as truly *canonical*: it helps us stay true to the form and structure of the Bible itself. By systematically working through the Bible to find resolutions to our concerns, we view our issue through the lens of the underlying theme of Scripture – Jesus Christ and His plan of redemption for humanity. Secondly, it could be argued that this method is more favourably *comprehensive*. We use the whole range of Scripture and explore the depth of its literary styles and presentations in a way that is likely to give us a more balanced and truly biblical result.

Thirdly, this method is *community-oriented*: the starting point of our ethics lies with the type of community that God is forming, and finishes with the type of individual that is required to build such a community. This is in stark contrast to much of our contemporary, Western understandings of ethics, where the individual character is placed at the forefront of attention, with the hope that when enough individuals act in accordance with the promoted ethic, the desired community will be achieved. Finally, Wright presents this method as releasing the Bible to be *contemporary*. By appealing to the Bible as an authority in our present lives, we are able to realize our position in the unfolding drama of Scripture: it is no longer an alien text directing a foreign and unknown populace, but rather an 'unfinished symphony' that continues to be written as each subsequent generation of Christians walk according to its authority in their time (Wright, 1995b p. 25).

This is in contrast to the *deductive* approach, which Wright describes as beginning with an in-depth study of Scripture – its narratives, laws and institutions – and then looking outwardly into society to see how they can be applied. This functions most effectively when a comprehensive study produces models or paradigms that can be legitimately released on to issues in our contemporary world. The underlying thought behind the deductive approach could be understood as, 'if this is what God required of Israel as a society... then assuming His moral consistency, we can argue for social objectives and policies which are comparable in principle to Israel's, even in the wider world of fallen humanity around us' (Wright, 1995b p. 36). The primary benefit of this approach is that it prevents us from taking the view that the social systems of Israel were only applicable within the confines of historical Israel and are not applicable to nations beyond their borders. The major constraint of this approach, however, is of the same ilk: the risk of recklessly applying and enforcing biblical conditions on a present population that has vast spiritual, political and cultural differences from the original recipients.

Whilst a partnership between both approaches is likely to be necessary to give the Bible its full authoritative voice, Wright observes that most socially-concerned researchers would lean towards an inductive approach. Readers of our piece will certainly recognize evidence of this method being applied in the early parts of this text as we strive to address the present matter of poverty.

2.1.b The recognition of sin

Given that we are grounding our appeal for understanding firmly in the Christian Bible, it would be exceptionally ignorant of us to snub one of the overwhelming themes of Scripture: the issue of sin and its effect on the human condition. Whilst non-theological considerations regarding poverty are essentially bound to deal only in the realm of the material, we uphold that the question of poverty in the world must not ignore the impact of the spiritual realm. As with other orthodox adherents to the Judeo-Christian faith, we hold to the biblical narrative of humanity being created in God's image and likeness [Genesis 1:26], given a safe and secure environment in which to dwell [Genesis 2:9], an ecosystem that was conducive to fruitful work [Genesis 1:28] and harmonious and unified relationships with one another [Genesis 2:23-25]. However, following temptation from the Adversary [Genesis 3:1-6], man and woman attempted to usurp the authority of God, and sin entered humanity's sphere.

An initial reading of Wright might find him lacking in appreciation for the impact of sin on well-being and, conversely, poverty. The section of work that introduced us to his understanding of the causes of poverty (Wright, 2004 pp. 169-171) makes no reference to an underlying spiritual dimension, only to poverty caused by the direct or indirect actions of others. Yet if we are truly interested in the holistic development of lives, we must not neglect the spiritual. As Myers advocates: 'I propose that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational and that its causes are fundamentally spiritual' (Myers, 2011 p. 15).

We must explore Wright's writing further if we are to take hold of his comprehension of a spiritual foundation of poverty. A survey of his work finds that Wright recognizes that humanity's sin and rebellion against God carries with it certain implications, and these implications will directly affect humanity's ability to live free from the risk of poverty. The impact of the Fall, and the ongoing fallen state of humanity, on the welfare and capacity of humans is therefore twofold. Firstly, humanity's relationships with all of physical creation is severely disfigured: mankind's access to a safe and secure environment is renounced [Genesis 3:22-23], the creation meant to sustain life now does so reluctantly [Genesis 3:17], fruitful work is replaced by 'toil' [Genesis 3:17-18] – literally: 'hardship', 'sorrow' and 'pain' (see Strong, 2009 H6087). Wright acknowledges this when he references the curse that is now on the ground (Wright, 2004 p. 129) causing the activity of work to lose the joy

and privilege of fruitful gain (p. 151). The fragmented relationship between humans and nature is also seen in the ongoing struggle of violence between humans and the earth (p. 130).

Secondly, the once-unified interpersonal relational arrangement between humans became marked by a perpetual power-struggle [Genesis 3:16]. Instead of enjoying a shared and equitable access to the earth's abundant resources, sinful humanity seeks to seize and possess more of the world's assets, sometimes even using them as a tool to dominate or oppress others (Wright, 2004 p. 150). Personal accumulation and growth became an end in itself, rather than a means to support the community, and the powerful manipulate distribution lines in order to gain more of an advantage (pp. 150-151). Furthermore, as it is true to say that sin, unfruitfulness and a spirit of self-indulgence now deface individual humans, it is also accurate to say that these vices now also mar collectives of humans. The structures and institutions created and maintained by humans [governmental, judicial, educational etc.] will inevitably suffer from the consequences of the fallen state of their founders and workers.

The two implications can also be self-perpetuating. An increase in violence can lead to war, which inevitably squanders resources and lays the land to waste, which leads to greater poverty. Conversely, when the natural resources available are not sufficient to ensure everyone's well-being, divisions and factions can arise, leading to an increase in violence and vengeance (Wright, 2004 p. 136). The two-fold implications of humanity's rebellion only serve to reinforce one another.

Additionally, we should be ready to concede that humanity's relationship with the spiritual realm becomes one of hostility. There is an open and declared rivalry between mankind and the spiritual kingdom of God's adversary [Genesis 3:15], marked by Satan's attempt to bring physical pain and loss [see Job 1 and 2] and to bring continual deterioration of human relationships [as exemplified by the violence of possessed men as recorded in Matthew 8:28-33]. This subjection to the vicious influence of the Adversary requires the interfering redemptive act of Christ for each individual [Colossians 1:13-14], the ongoing sanctification of individuals by the Holy Spirit to restore God's image [2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22-23] and the final act of complete restoration and re-creation by God [Revelation 21:1-5].

Pope John Paul II summarized the need for redemption in his *Centesimus annus* (John Paul II, 1991), an encyclical that articulated the Catholic Church's teaching on social and economic justice. Whilst affirming the Church's role in the pursuit of social justice, he also upheld the sin caveat:

Man, who was created for freedom, bears within himself the wound of original sin, which constantly draws him toward evil and puts him in need of redemption. Not only is this doctrine an integral part of Christian revelation; it also has great hermeneutical value insofar as it helps one to understand human reality.

And:

Only at the end of history will the Lord return in glory... with the establishment of a new heaven and earth... but as long as time lasts the struggle between good and evil continues even in the human heart itself.

(source: John Paul II, 1991 CA 25)

We raise the issue of sin as it is one of monumental significance for the Christian development researcher. Whilst we may speculate on the philosophical meaning of poverty and the practical implications of paucity in human lives, we must at all times be aware of the most fundamental of spiritual truths: the reality that what we know as 'poverty' is, at its most fundamental, a symptom of sin¹⁵ – and sin can only be perfectly and irreversibly answered through redemption, sanctification and re-creation. This theological concept of human fallen-ness is surely central to the whole analysis of poverty, and indeed 'explains' why there is such a thing as poverty in a fallen world. This thesis is therefore largely concerned with exploring how that fallen-ness works out in practice.

2.2 The Context[s] of the Old Testament Landscape

Before we engage more directly with Wright's observations, it is important to set the scene with regards to the sociocultural contexts from which the biblical texts arise. Like any text, those that became the Old Testament reflect the realities of life, power, struggle and provision according to the groups from which they came. The statements reflect the material and social realities – class, gender, family, religion and economy – of the people concerned.

Admittedly, this is a huge task as the biblical text reports on an incredibly diverse array of historical events, people, themes and eras. In addition, an attempt to establish accurate understandings of

¹⁵ Christian Smith, Professor of Sociology at University of Notre Dame, calls this humanity's condition of 'brokenness': 'every culture, philosophy, and religion has developed some account or other of what I am calling *brokenness*, conceptualizing it as ignorance, faults, wrongness, error, darkness, injustice, deviance, misdirection, evil, alienation, or some other idea that recognizes and addresses the problem raised here'. See pp. 75-76 of SMITH, C. 2010. *What is a person? rethinking humanity, social life, and the moral good from the person up* [Online]. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

social conditions from an era which is unable to speak back to our assumptions is fraught with difficulty, according to both Goldingay (2015 p. 871) and Pleins (2001 p. 16). Nevertheless a [brief] overview of observations on the socioeconomic conditions underpinning the writing of the text is necessary, because our understanding of this ancient society will affect our application of its wisdom and principles in modern circumstances.

2.2.a Socioeconomic context of Old Testament Israel

It would seem reasonable to say that in the nomadic lives of early Israel, there was no great distinction between poor and wealthy (McKenzie, 1965 p. 682). However, it is clear by the prophetic literature that wealth inequality and poverty had manifested itself as a dire social problem under the monarchy. It is likely that these fluctuations occurred because of changes to five features of Israel's socioeconomic environment: social organisation, land rights, land responsibilities, loans and debts, and markets.

i. Social organization

Since earliest times, the family has been the core unit that has shaped all of human social configuration and the social structure of early Israel was no different. According to Wright (2004 pp. 338-339), Israel's kinship structure had three tiers: *the father's house*, originally a self-sufficient unit which consisted of all of the people that lived within the household of a single living male ancestor; *the clan*, which was a protective association of related households named after one of Jacob's grandsons, and; *the tribe*, which was the largest kinship grouping, named after the sons of Jacob and primarily connected through a common landholding. In early Israel, production and provision of life's necessities were considered the function of the family unit: all contributed and all enjoyed the benefit. Likewise, if one was suffering, the group suffered and therefore responded quickly in order to alleviate suffering. As the basic unit of the community, the family was obligated to be a source of mutual support – thus punishments for dishonouring family ties were stern (Hay, 1989 p. 32; see also Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

The books of Samuel describe the development of Israel from this grouping of tribes into a unified state under the rule of Saul around the 10th century BC. Hay sees that the major responsibility of the king was the coordination of national defence, and early Deuteronomic references to kingship were primarily concerned with limiting his powers (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). In sharp contrast to established kings of the Ancient Near East [ANE], an Israelite king was expected to refrain from

amassing wealth and power and, as a servant of both the Lord and his people, he was to be under the Law in every respect (Hay, 1989 p. 38). We know that by and large, the kings over both united Israel and the divided kingdom failed in these duties (Wright, 2004 p. 159), resulting in cycles of internal and external wars and centuries of civil and moral decay.

By the eighth century BC – the century of the northern kingdom's exile – a social revolution had taken place (de Vaux, 1973 pp. 23, 73). The society once built on the family unit had been replaced by a society of kings and subjects, employers and employees, rich and poor.¹⁶ Prosperity contrasted with poverty seemed to be the order of the day: the houses of the rich became larger, more elaborate and more distant from those of the poor, and the wealthy would 'add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room' [Isaiah 5:8].¹⁷ The authority of the patriarch had been gradually worn down and solidarity of the family unit had eroded. The individual person began to emerge as a unit separate from the family group, and once-held expectations of mutual kinship and obligatory assistance seemed to lose their strength, as is evidenced by the fact that the prophets had to take up the case of the poor, widow and orphan [Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6; 22:3], where it once would have been the responsibility of the community.

The fall of Jerusalem then marked the end of Israel as a political unit. Judea subsequently became a vassal of successive empires. Post-exile, the Jews formed religious communities according to the limits of their cultural and religious autonomy, seeking again the ancient idea that Israel would have God as their king (de Vaux, 1973 p. 98).

ii. Land rights

Though ancient Israel was primarily an advanced agrarian society with some animal husbandry, it was still largely based on a subsistence economy – one where agricultural work and stockbreeding was essential, yet typically only supported life at a minimal level. Therefore, secure land holdings were the foremost resource for ensuring the well-being of a group. In the majority of areas in the ANE, land ownership was the privilege of the ruling royal classes: kings owned the land of the small-

¹⁶ This stratification of society is seen by sociologists as emblematic of agrarian societies that are emerging or expanding, and typically causes three rifts: between the small governing class and the large, voiceless masses; between the urban minority and the rural majority; and between the small literate minority and the large illiterate majority. The result in these societies was that 'the small and often literate urban governing class lived in a strikingly different world from that of the illiterate, rural, peasant majority.' See p. 145 in LENSKI, G. E. & NOLAN, P. 2011. *Human societies: An introduction to macrosociology*, Boulder, Colorado, McGraw-Hill Companies.

¹⁷ As agrarian societies developed, there was typically a corresponding increase in productivity. According to Lenski and Nolan [2011], the single most important consequence of greater economic surplus was the 'growth of the state and the power of the governing class that controlled it.' See p. 174 in *ibid*.

city states they ruled; the land of Egypt belonged to Pharaoh (de Vaux, 1973 p. 164, Wright, 2004 p. 89). The Israelite society rejected such rule however, and maintained that the land was to come under family, not royal, ownership. Land was divided up according to the twelve tribes fairly [Numbers 26:55-56; 33:54] to ensure that each family should have enough land according to its size and needs. To help ensure that this most precious resource would not accumulate into the hands of a few powerful parties, family ownership of the land was continually guarded by regulations protecting family boundaries [Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17] and assurances that the land could not be separated on a permanent basis from its family owners. This was achieved via the Jubilee laws [Leviticus 25:8-17] and the next-of-kin redemption laws [Leviticus 25:25-28]. Such land, therefore, was not readily available to be bought or sold commercially, for it did not belong to an individual but to a family – including as yet unborn generations (Wright, 2004 p. 90). In Wright's opinion, this allocation of land rights was not initiated to ensure that everyone had the *same* amount of land, but rather that they had *enough* to meet the needs of their family (Wright, 2004 p. 157).

iii. Land responsibilities

The idea that Israelite families held complete ownership of their allocated land is slightly misleading, however, as the land was still considered to be God's land that had been gifted to Israel (Wright, 2004 p. 93). In Leviticus 25:23, we see that God still retained ultimate ownership [an idea that actually parallels with the kingly ownership of nearby nations] and viewed the Israelites as something of tenants upon His land. Given this approach, God also maintained moral authority over how it would be used and who could benefit from the use of the land.

The allocation and protection of productive land for each family group was firstly intended to benefit the family owners by ensuring the opportunity for productive work opportunities for all family members (Hay, 1989 p. 34). However, as owner, God ensured a secondary benefit of the land: it belonged to all people. The poor were permitted to glean [Leviticus 19:9-10], a passer-by had the right to satisfy his hunger [Deuteronomy 23:24-25], and a tithe was required for the landless Levites and the poor [Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12]. In principle, a family had the responsibility to contribute towards meeting the needs of others with their resource. A family also had a responsibility to ensure the ethical treatment of anyone working on, or in, their land. Upholding safety precautions, treating employees fairly and respecting work animals were all basic expectations for anyone who had received a gift of land from God (Wright, 2004 p. 95).

iv. Loans and debt

Both Wright (2004 p. 164) and Hay (1989 p. 36) recognize the restrictions placed upon the giving of loans and the safeguards employed against the build-up of debt. An Israelite was forbidden from charging another Israelite interest on a loan [Deuteronomy 23:19-20], especially if he was in need [Leviticus 25:35-37]. A fellow countryman who was in need should be seen as someone to be helped, not someone to extort for financial gain. Likewise, the Jubilee laws of land return were in place to ensure that family debt should never persist beyond one generation [Leviticus 25].

However, de Vaux (1973 p. 170) argues that these laws would have been frequently violated, particularly as Israel developed economically and as corruption was modelled in surrounding nations. By the writing of Proverbs, it was recognized that there were men who do charge interest [Proverbs 28:8]; by Ezekiel's time it had become one of the sins that condemns Israel [Ezekiel 22:12]; and following the Exile we still see people burdened with this type debt [Nehemiah 5:1-13].

v. Markets and limited marketization

Finally, it is presumed that in a subsistence economy based largely on agriculture, the influence of the market would have been reasonably limited. Hay (1989 p. 36) observes that the Law has nothing to directly say about regulating the market, even though it is assumed that money was in use at the time. His reasoning is that the combined social structures of the family unit and economic structures of land division likely gave way to very little market trade (this is supported by de Vaux, 1973 p. 72). Each family had its own land resource and would sow and reap, breed and kill, as their effort dictated. Returns would be kept within the family unit as a whole: with no division of wages and profits, no individual would accumulate monetary wealth. Perhaps the only requirement for a marketplace that would have been very small, geographically limited and free from middleman merchants (see de Vaux, 1973 p. 78),¹⁸ would be justice, fairness and honesty: weights were to be honest to prevent cheating in buying or selling [Deuteronomy 25:13-16] and any wages were to be paid promptly [Deuteronomy 24:14-15].

¹⁸ In her very insightful piece, *Scripture, culture and agriculture: an agrarian reading of the Bible*, Davis insists that the biblical model is that rural communities first maintain themselves, and then engage in mutually advantageous exchanges with others, including urban populations. She argues that this in contrast to contemporary practice, where money flows out of local communities and towards urban populations. See p. 105 of DAVIS, E. F. 2009. *Scripture, culture, and agriculture: an agrarian reading of the Bible*.

It is likely that large-scale trading did not come into effect until King Solomon who, against early restrictions on the king's accrual of possessions, traded internationally in order to amass possession and wealth for his kingdom [1 Kings 9:26-28]. However, trading would have logically become a common practice during and following the Diaspora, as the Jewish people by necessity had to secure an income following the loss of their family land (de Vaux, 1973 pp. 78-79).

2.2.b Language context of Hebrew references to poverty

A second need in establishing the Old Testament context is to recognize the linguistic background to the texts, in particular with regards to poverty. From the outset, it is evident that the Hebrew language displays a great depth for communicating the issue of poverty. In the NASB translation of the Old Testament the word 'poor' appears 103 times in 99 verses and the word 'poverty' appears 11 times in 11 verses.¹⁹ In the New Testament, the same is only seen 39 times in 39 verses and 5 times in 5 verses. We accept that other words are also used [and that the former canon is longer than the latter], which means that this observation is not completely conclusive. It is, however, an interesting observation as it indicates the extent of the poverty topic in the Old Testament texts.

A significant author on the Hebraic lexical nuances on the topic of poverty is J. David Pleins, Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, and writer of the 'Poor/Poverty (Old Testament)' entrance in the *Anchor Bible dictionary* (Pleins, 1992), among other works. His writing observes that there are two primary features of poverty according to the Hebrew Bible: a lack of economic resources and material goods, and political and legal powerlessness and oppression (1992 p. 402). He also suggests that each genre's approach to poverty is reasonably distinct: the legal texts regulate the treatment of the poor [including redistribution of goods]; the prophetic texts [as well as Job, and in some instances, Ecclesiastes] concern themselves with the oppression of the poor by the powerful landowners and royal classes; the book of Proverbs is seen by Pleins as reinforcing the idea that poverty is a result of the poor's own actions and choices; and in the Psalms the poor are treated compassionately by God [though it may be debatable when 'the poor' changes from an economic term to a spiritual term]. The narrative literature, given its span, is noticeably quiet in its treatment of the topic.

¹⁹ These, and all further word counts, have been retrieved from an online database and are from the NASB. See BLUE LETTER BIBLE. 1996-2012a. *Dictionary and word search for "poor" in the NASB* [Online]. Available: <http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=poor&t=NASB> [Accessed 15 November 2012], BLUE LETTER BIBLE. 1996-2012b. *Dictionary and word search for "poverty" in the NASB* [Online]. Available: <http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=poverty&t=NASB> [Accessed 15 November 2012].

A semantic survey of the literature finds differing results in the terms employed by the Old Testament authors to describe the poor and poverty: Pleins (1992 p. 403) presents seven words, while Cyril Rodd (2000)^{20, 21} suggests at least eight terms.²² Both are sound and significant pieces, and we will refer to both here. In itself, this is not our contribution to original knowledge, but rather a consideration of established literature in order to prepare a foundation for the unfolding discussion in later chapters.

i. 'Afflicted'

The most common term for poverty, עָנִי (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #1652d; Strong 2009 H6040) and its related term, עָנָה (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #1652a; Strong 2009 H6035), occur over 80 times in the corpus and are often translated in the NASB as 'poor' and 'afflicted.' Highly noticeable in the prophetic literature, these terms typically refer to an individual suffering through affliction, often leading to a state of depression or wretchedness. The individual would find themselves in a stunted, humble, lowly position, typically with no property and earning his bread through service to others. Their impecunious economic state is usually a result of oppression or infliction from another – throughout the Psalms they are hounded and seized by the wicked and strong [Psalm 10:2, 14:6, 35:10, 37:14, 106:16].

²⁰ Rodd's survey includes works by Thomas D. Hanks, Leslie J. Hoppe and A. Kuschke. Rodd's work will be referenced primarily where no English translation of these sources is available. He also relies heavily on the NIDOTTE.

²¹ Though we make use of Rodd's semantic survey, we disagree with his scepticism and rejection of special revelation and the authority of the Bible. See pp. 323-325 of RODD, C. S. 2000. *Glimpses of a strange land*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark.

²² We recognize the limitations of conducting such a lexical and semantic analysis, taking guidance from Barr's 1961 piece, titled *The semantics of biblical language* (Barr, 1991 reprint referenced here), which was a targeted challenge to complex language-based essays and arguments where the primary unit of interest is the individual word rather than the sentence and text as a unit. He confronted the idea of a 'theological lexicography', which has become prominent in the form of theological wordbooks or theological dictionaries and fiercely rebukes the hyper-reliance on such lexical analysis in shaping a researcher's theology. We uphold Barr's concerns here that scholars are frequently at risk of overestimating the importance of a single lexical unit, and we agree with him that fundamental theological content is usually found within the context of the entire sentence or complete passage. A word can be employed frequently and in a variety of locations, but each specific sentence in the Bible is unique, and thus carries a distinctive and interesting message (this is further supported by Pleins, 1992 p. 403).

Our position – which gives due consideration to the work of both lexical authors (Harris et al., 1980, Strong, 2009) and academic (Pleins, 2001, Pleins, 1994, Pleins, 1992) but also remembers the points of critics (Barr, 1991, Silva, 1995) – is that while there may be clear distinctions between the favoured vocabulary for 'poor' between the various writers and circumstances, it is difficult to make an irrefutable conclusion on the basis of Hebrew semantics alone. It is of huge importance to use the complete text in our exercise of gaining a more complete understanding of the biblical writer's intentions.

ii. 'Lowly'

לָדָל, meaning 'one who is low' (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #433a; Strong 2009 H1800), is used 48 times in the Old Testament, translated frequently as 'poor', 'helpless', 'weak' and 'lowly'. It represents those who lack material wealth [Proverbs 10:15], but are not specifically destitute, and it does not emphasize pain or oppression, affliction or life-threatening need. The dominant stress of the word is placed on their vulnerability and loss of dignity.

In socioeconomic terms, the לָדָל represented the lowest classes in Israel, whom the Babylonians left behind when plundering Jerusalem:

Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest [לָדָל] people of the land [2 Kings 24:14, see also Amos 2:7].

In this account of Nebuchadnezzar's subjugation of Jerusalem circa 600 BC, the king of Babylon took captive anything of value from Judah. Both the material valuables, and the human valuables, were enslaved, leaving only the poor and unskilled people of the land – those considered too lowly to cause any further trouble for the Babylonians. When recognizing that the לָדָל was not among the four types of dependents in a family [male slave, female slave, hired servant or sojourner cf. Leviticus 25:6], Fabry reasons that he should be seen not as one who has no property, but one whose 'property is small.' Whilst a free and full citizen, the לָדָל is undoubtedly caught up in the perpetual struggle to make a daily living by hard work, and in being so, is likely to give up some of his independence in return for benefits. Being a 'little man' and 'helpless', he warrants specific protection in matters relating to justice (Fabry 2004 p. 219).

An important aspect of Israel's duty as God's people was the inclusion of the לָדָל into their civic and religious life. The instructions for the healing of leprosy, given in Leviticus Chapter 14, indicate that the לָדָל, whilst not fully exempt from financial expenditure on the required sacrifices, were to be partially relieved of the full financial burden.

But if he is poor [לָדָל] and his means are insufficient, then he is to take one male lamb for a guilt offering as a wave offering to make atonement for him, and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil, and two

turtledoves or two young pigeons which are within his means, the one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering [Leviticus 14:21-22].

The offering that would suffice for them was appreciably less than that required of other Israelites: two birds, cedar wood, scarlet, hyssop, two lambs without blemish, one young ewe without blemish, a three tenth deal of fine flour for the meat offering and one log of oil [cf. Leviticus 14:1-20]. Notice that the ceremony used for the לָד was to be exactly the same as that used for the rich: when the poor met their obligations to the best their ability could afford, they were to be given the same treatment as wealthier society. Matthew Henry relays that this is an indicator that God requires from a man 'according to what he has and not according to what he has not.' To God, he deduces, the souls of the rich and poor alike are just as precious (Henry 1996).

Given their precarious position, Yahweh instructed the higher classes to treat the לָד with dignity and respect. Oppressing, robbing, withholding from or exploiting the לָד was seen as an act of dishonour towards one's Maker [Proverbs 14:31]. Instructions to give direct charity to the לָד is rarely found [Proverbs 22:9 is one exception], rather, the righteous person is one who is considerate of their cause [Proverbs 29:7]. Pleins argues that לָד is the conscious first choice of word in the proverbial writing, reflecting an ideological choice on behalf of the wisdom writers (Pleins, 1992 p. 406).

iii. 'Needy'

The next term referenced by Pleins is the אֶבְיָוֹן who are very poor in a material sense: the primary emphasis on their need, more than their affliction (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #3a; Strong 2009 H0034). It frequently equates with hunger and thirst, homelessness, and general physical insecurity. The word occurs 61 times in the Old Testament, and may refer to the day-labourers who are completely dependent on other people for their survival.

In the early stages following the Exodus, as Yahweh was shaping the new nation of Israel, He introduced the laws regarding the 'Shmita' year – the year of release. According to this law, every seven years those with land were instructed to refrain from sowing any crops and to relinquish the

reaping of their product to the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן. The aim of this law was to ensure that all parts of the community might fully enjoy the benefits of reaping and enjoying a harvest.

You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but *on* the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy [אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן] of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove [Exodus 23:10-11].

Alongside this principle of shared resource, the Israelite people were directed to liberally help the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן in the form of debt-relief. Each seventh year [unrelated to the Shmita cycle], all debts of the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן should be forgiven [Deuteronomy 15:1-4], and during the Jubilee year [every fiftieth year] all 'brothers' who had sold themselves into slavery to pay debt were to be released back to their family [Leviticus 25:10]. It is likely that at the time debts lasting more than six years were of the very worst kind, and repayment was improbable. This 'debt write-off' would have ensured that individuals do not receive continual harassment for a loan they were unable to repay. And at all other times, individual Israelites should loan them resources that they might need [Deuteronomy 15:8]. The king was even instructed to defend the cause of the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן as part of his mandate to rule and judge righteously [Proverbs 31:9].

It is this sense of required care for the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן that leads some (see Botterweck 2004) to see a conjunction between the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן and the 'just and righteous man' (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #1879c; Strong 2009 H6663). According to Rabbi Jill Jacobs²³ (2010), the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן is generally assumed to be righteous, and thus is set aside for special protection from God – either divinely or through His decrees to humanity – when he suffers through rampant injustice and greed. Citing the prophet Amos's condemnation of the false piety of his time, Jacobs comments: 'when those in power fail to prevent the exploitation of others, and when it becomes impossible for those who act fairly to become wealthy, there is a greater likelihood that the righteous will become poor...' (2010 p. 50).

It is the אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן who are referenced in the much-cited promise of Deuteronomy 15:4-5:

²³ Jill Jacobs is the Executive Director of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. She holds rabbinic ordination and an MA in Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary, an MS in Urban Affairs from Hunter College, and a BA from Columbia University.

However, there will be no poor [אֲבִיּוֹן] among you, since the Lord will surely bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, if only you listen obediently to the voice of the Lord your God, to observe all this commandment which I am commanding you today.

Given the considerable confusion regarding the likelihood of this promise being realized [that there might actually be no poor], it is worth reflecting on the observations of Botterweck (2004 p. 32). Understanding this specific 'poor' as the אֲבִיּוֹן – one who is likely to be without land – Botterweck sees it creditable that if Israel followed God's commandment to release all debts [including land] every seven years [15:1-2], it would follow that all the אֲבִיּוֹן would too receive their land back, thus restoring their ability to produce food and wealth for themselves. In this way, the promise that 'there shall be no poor' is very likely to be realized as a result of obedience.

iv. 'Destitute'

רֵישׁ [or רֵאשׁ / רֵישׁ - the second term only occurs in Proverbs] is a term simply meaning 'poverty' or 'destitution' (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #2138; Strong 2009 H7326) and is referenced 22 times in the Old Testament – predominantly in the book of Proverbs. They are understood to be enduring a condition of poverty common amongst the lower class. In characteristic proverbial fashion, the רֵישׁ poor are usually compared and contrasted with the rich, at opposite ends of the honour/shame table (Saebo 2004).

v. 'Poor'

מְסִכִּין (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #1221; Strong 2009 H4542) occurs in just three verses of the book of Ecclesiastes [4:13; 9:15,16] and is translated in the NASB each time as 'poor'. Given the paucity of the usage, it has proved difficult to draw precise conclusions as to its meaning, but Harris, Archer et al. (1980) regard the comparison of the מְסִכִּין to a king [Ecclesiastes 4:13] to signify a class of people lacking in wealth and/or power. They also draw on the LXX translation to offer guidance, noting that the Greek translation to the word '*penes*' used here refers to one who does not have extensive possessions and must work daily to survive [this is contrasted to the '*ptōchos*' poor used elsewhere – a person so destitute that he cannot even work to provide for himself].

vi. 'Dispossessed'

A lesser-used word that the translators of the NASB have associated with poverty is the Hebrew word יָרַשׁ (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #920; Strong 2009 H3423). This word is primarily related to the incidence of one party taking possession of, through inheritance or military strength, a second party's land or possessions. Whilst יָרַשׁ occurs 271 times in 204 verses in the NASB, it is only translated as 'poor' twice [Proverbs 20:13; 1 Samuel 2:7], 'poverty' [Proverbs 23:21], 'impoverished' [Genesis 45:11] and 'in want' [Proverbs 30:9]. In the proverbial texts, dispossession usually happens because of a moral failing – the love of sleep [20:13], heavy drinking and gluttony [23:21].

vii. 'In want'

In a similar vein, the word מִקְסוֹר (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #705e; Strong 2009 H4270) typically speaks of a lack. It occurs 13 times in 13 verses in the NASB and is translated as 'want' [4 occurrences], 'poverty' [3], 'need' [3], 'lack' [2] and 'poor' [1]. When used in the book of Proverbs, מִקְסוֹר is always used in a similar manner to יָרַשׁ, in that מִקְסוֹר poverty is always preceded by certain individual actions: too much slumber [Proverbs 6:10-11, 24:33-34]; withholding more than appropriate [11:24]; idle chatter without labour [14:23]; hasty plans [21:5]; a love of wine and oil [21:17]; oppressing the poor and favouring the rich [22:16]; and withholding giving from the poor [28:27] are all cited in Proverbs as precursors to מִקְסוֹר. Alternatively, when used outside the book of Proverbs, מִקְסוֹר is similar in meaning to אֶבְיֹן but differs in that it is always used in the context of a grammatical double-negative: given certain circumstances, an individual will *not* be מִקְסוֹר; they will have sufficiency. Judges 18:10 is one such example: 'When you enter, you will come to a secure people with a spacious land; for God has given it into your hand, a place where there is no lack [מִקְסוֹר] of anything that is on the earth.' [c.f. Judges 19:19, Psalm 34:9].

viii. 'Becoming poorer'

Meanwhile, the book of Leviticus alone uses the term מוֹד as an expression of poverty (Harris, Archer et al. 1980 #1159; Strong 2009 H4134). It occurs only five times in the NASB – translated four times as 'becomes poor' and once as 'poorer' – to describe someone in the act of becoming poor, low or depressed. The writings in the book of Leviticus [25:25, 25:35, 25:39, 25:47 and 27:8]

urge the Israelites to engage in a manner that will prevent this poor person from lowering further into poverty.

Additional observations

Our understanding of the significance of these word meanings and interpretation is varied. Three further authors have made contributions that are also noteworthy for us. Brazilian Old Testament professor Milton Schwantes²⁴ wrote his doctorate on the right of the poor in the Old Testament, and examined the four terms, רֵישׁ, דֵּל, אֶבְיוֹן and עָנִי, looking for parallels and contradictions in the Pentateuch, the history books and the prophets. Though he acknowledges nuances, he considers the four words to be largely synonymous, referring to impoverished, dependent peasants who still possess a house, cattle and fields – and above the social ranking of the עֲבֵד.

A.G. Auld builds upon Schwantes' work by observing a shift in the language of poverty following the Exile. He argues that the later poverty texts take on a more spiritual and religious undertone, likely to arise from the fact that the entire Jewish remnant was now economically poor and socially deprived. The language following the Exile therefore frequently describes spiritual poverty – a humbling before God – as much as economic and material poverty (Auld, 1986 p. 69).

Meanwhile, author and associate professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Phyllis Bird (1996), observes that the terms used for the impoverished individual also tend to be masculine-centric. Apart from references to the widow, the poor male was typically the focus of the attention in the Hebrew text. As the leader of the basic familial social structure, it was the plight of the male that was of chief concern. The prosperity of the majority of females was linked directly to the strength of her family leader. His prosperity virtually ensured her prosperity; reciprocally, his poverty virtually ensured her impoverishment. Females are rarely mentioned separately because they fall within the male-headed family system.

²⁴ 'Das Recht der Armen' [1997] is not found in an English translation. Rodd's summary [p. 162] is used here.

2.3 Wright's Observations

Let us return now to the task of assessing Wright's observations. Wright classifies the causes of poverty to be *natural causes*, *laziness* and *oppression* (Wright, 2004 pp. 169-171). We will refer to this as 'Wright's Model of Tri-Causation', though others have observations that could be seen as overlapping.²⁵ While Wright presented an overview of this biblical approach, it was not the scope of his work to further elaborate how this might relate to the secular theorists [e.g. Booth, Rowntree, Sen, Chambers]. This piece therefore proposes to take note of Wright's observations, further explore them under the lens of Scripture and assess whether his observations need to be extended with reference to other biblical texts.

In the words of some, Wright's approach to understanding the aetiology of poverty is 'remarkably balanced' (Keller, 2010 p. 33). Wright's overview of the causes makes reference to numerous individual scriptures, but importantly, he argues that these factors do not work in isolation – each one adversely affects the likelihood of another becoming prominent, leading to a progressive and downward spiral into the condition we know as poverty.

Wright explains *natural causes* to be 'the result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason' (Wright, 2004 p. 169). To support the idea of natural causes being an instigator of poverty, Wright makes reference to natural disasters such as the famines of Genesis 47 and the bereavement and widowhood met by Naomi in the book of Ruth, or the personal disasters encountered by Job (p. 169). By extension, this would also include any disabling injury, floods or fires or instance where a person or people group is inadvertently disadvantaged by an unforeseeable tragedy. Interestingly, he acknowledges that attributing the calamity to the hand of God [rightly or wrongly] does little to negate the pain of such a tragedy and there is rarely a suitable explanation or rationalization: it simply happens.

²⁵ In his discussion of poverty and the poor in the Old Testament, Kaiser presents a list of reasons for poverty, but fails to conduct any real useful exegesis on the texts: 'Scripture examines many causes or reasons for poverty, but these causes are, more often than not, attributed to human faults instead of to some action on God's part. For example, poverty may come because of laziness or sloth (Proverbs 6:10; 19:15; 24:30); or it may even result from living high on the hog (Proverbs 21:17); or perhaps it is due to just plain foolishness and stubbornness (Proverbs 13:18; 28:19). Poverty may come as a result of oppression and the greed of others (Exodus 1:13; Jeremiah 22:13), or it may come from events over which the individual has no control, such as a disaster, war, disease, fraud, earthquake, tsunami, or political oppression. These causes are just as real, and they need to be considered before one quickly tries to pass off all poverty as the heavy hand of God raised against the poor.' See L847 of WALTER C KAISER 2014. Poverty and Poor in the Old Testament. In: BRADLEY, A. R., LINDSLEY, A., INSTITUTE FOR FAITH, W. & ECONOMICS (eds.) *For the least of these: a Biblical answer to poverty*. Kindle ed. Bloomington, Indiana: West Bow Press.

In the category of poverty caused by what he simply titles *laziness*, Wright observes ‘laziness and squandering can indeed lead to impoverishment, and hard work is often conducive to economic prosperity’ (Wright, 2004 p. 170). Wright acknowledges that this is predominantly the view of the book of Proverbs, where the avoidance of hard work is a named cause of economic lack [Proverbs 12:11; 14:23; 20:13], but is aware that there are often other causes in play [i.e. 13:23] (pp. 169-170).

The final category of poverty causation – and the principal cause according to Wright’s reading of the biblical literature – is *oppression*. Acknowledging oppression as the largest root cause admits that the largest cause of poverty in humanity is actually humanity: the ‘exploitation of others by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor’ (Wright, 2004 p. 170). Wright goes further, noting that oppression²⁶ is recognized in the Old Testament in a remarkably nuanced way:

- **Exploitation of the socially weak.** This is particularly true when there is no stronger party prepared to take up their cause [see 2 Kings 4:1-7].
- **Exploitation of the economically weak.** This is prevalent when lenders, employers and leaders take advantage of the poorer in society, by imposing heavy taxation, rents or usury, or by withholding personal items or wages [see Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 15:7-9, 24:14-18; 1 Samuel 8:10-18; Nehemiah 5; Amos 2:6].
- **Exploitation of the ethnically weak.** This occurs when people are at a disadvantage because of their ethnicity, and could occur in employment, social, trading or judicial circles. As the Israelites had themselves once been enslaved as a minority in Egypt, they are told to pay particular attention to the vulnerability of the ethnic minorities in their midst [see Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33].
- **Royal excess, corruption and abuse of power.** Using royal standing in order to violently take advantage of the people is a frequent observation throughout the Old Testament. Solomon, Ahab, Jehoiakim are referenced for their exploits. Ezekiel condemns this

²⁶ Keller, who draws heavily on Wright, reports the forms of oppression in another way. He cites ‘a judicial system weighted in favour of the powerful’ [Leviticus 19:15], ‘loans with excessive interest’ [Exodus 22:25-27], ‘unjustly low wages’ [Jeremiah 22:13; James 5:1-6] and ‘extremes of wealth and poverty’ [Amos 5:11-12; Ezekiel 22:29; Micah 2:2; Isaiah 5:8] as the key features. See p. 33 of KELLER, T. 2010. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*, EP Dutton.

behaviour as it spreads beyond the royal walls to become a scourge in general society [see 1 Kings 11-12, 21; Jeremiah 22:13; Ezekiel 22:6, 25, 29].

- **Judicial corruption and false accusation.** At times, abuse of power was not restricted to the sovereign leaders, but it also became a feature of the judicial leaders. The poor were frequently victims of corrupt judicial procedures, even to the point of being deliberately disadvantaged by legislation [see 1 Kings 21:7-16; Isaiah 10:1-2; Amos 5:7, 11-12]

The task at hand is to ensure that we have given Wright's observations an appropriate reading. Our first assignment is to contextualize the verses that he has provided to support his assertions. Our goal is to provide a summary of the context behind each passage to ensure that Wright, and we, have given it a suitable reading.

2.3.a Natural Causes

The scriptural basis given by Wright to support this theme is noticeably thin: the Egyptian famine of Genesis 41-47, with lesser references to the bereavement and widowhood met by Naomi in the book of Ruth, and a sentence offered regarding the personal disasters encountered by Job. The passages used by Wright to support the natural cause theory are also of interest as they are narrative, rather than normative, pieces of writing. Therefore we see that it is best used in the form of an illustration or inspiration, rather than as a source of didactic instruction. Neither Wright nor Keller provide a detailed exegesis of the passages, so we are left to interpret this independently.

The Egyptian Famine

In the lead up to the Egyptian [and Canaan] famine passage, we see that Joseph, son of Jacob, had risen to a place of influence and prominence in the Egyptian empire following his accurate interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams [Genesis 41:25-40]. Joseph foresees seven forthcoming years of prosperity, followed by seven impending years of famine, and urges Pharaoh to begin a grain-storage program to see his nation through the years of calamity. In making plans for the storage of food, we can see that Joseph took reasonable care to avert the impact of the coming famine [there is a commonality with the illustration of the ant in Proverbs 6:6-8, as we see that industry and the accrual of a savings reserve during prosperous times can help weather the storms of challenging times].

The famine is reportedly a prodigious event, as Genesis 47:13 describes that all the food was used up and people were starving throughout Egypt and Canaan. Joseph acted swiftly to counter the impact of the shortage. Wenham (1994) describes the three stages of his famine response:

- i. Egyptians exchange money for grain (47:13-14)
- ii. Egyptians mortgage herds for grain [47:15-16]
- iii. Egyptians mortgage land and become royal slaves for grain (47:18-26)

(source: Wenham, 1994 p. 447)

Joseph acted swiftly and decisively following the onset of the famine to mobilizing the population and ensuring access to food stores, paying adequate attention to his dependents [the civilian population] and consequently alleviating a potential widespread disaster. The end result was that lives were saved [47:25]. In his wisdom Joseph acted responsibly pre- and post- calamity, and successfully countered the worst of the famine's potential impact.

Selling their cattle to Joseph in exchange for grain was a wise option for both the people and the cattle, as only Pharaoh had the means of supporting the cattle. The proviso that one-fifth of the harvest from the seed given is returned to Pharaoh [47:23-24] is Scripture's first recorded instance of a type of national tax. By the end of the famine, all the Egyptians [bar the priests], were serfs and tenants of royal land. However, as slaves, the people would have expected to benefit from Pharaoh's rule. Their food supply was now his responsibility. Wenham (1994 p. 449) explains that our understanding of slavery in ancient society should not be tainted by our memories of the African slave trade. Slavery in this context was a legitimate way of bailing out the destitute, and life under a benevolent master could offer a reasonably comfortable status [cf. Joseph with Potiphar]. Indeed, Botterweck (2004) reminds us that the prophet Amos, in his renunciation of oppression, does not object to the caustic law that enjoins slavery to debt-payment per se, but rather the 'unjust and unscrupulous slavery as a payment for debts which are not real or serious' (p. 31).

From the change of plot in Genesis 47:27, we presume that Joseph's intervention was successful, as there is no more reference to this crippling famine. His extra measures are seemingly well received ['... you have saved our lives...' is recorded in verse 25], and despite the possibility of

extra gain for Pharaoh, the people understood that Joseph had not acted to enrich himself at their expense.

The Bethlehem Famine

The other biblical narrative that details this type of disaster, but with much more devastating outcomes, is found in the opening verse of the book of Ruth. During 'the days when the judges governed' [Ruth 1:1], we see that a famine has once again developed throughout Israel [likely to be an ever-present threat in an agrarian society]. A Jewish man, Elimelech, sees that he can no longer provide for his family and he takes them to the neighbouring Moab. Migration in search of food would have been a fundamental ploy in the search for economic survival at the time. Elimelech was an Ephrathite – a kin group with the clan of Judah – and his family should have assisted him before he plunged into desperation [in line with the 'Law of Redemption' of Leviticus 25:23-34]. The text does not say why this did not happen for Elimelech [perhaps his family were also suffering because of the famine – though if this were the case we might expect to read of them also making the journey to Moab]. While in Moab, Elimelech and his two sons die, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah [both Moabitesses] alone as a trio of widows. While Elimelech has succumbed to the first disaster after his kin fail to come to his aid, this trouble has now been multiplied into a secondary disaster for Naomi: she is a widow with dependents and she now has no food security or a way of producing for herself.

When Naomi hears that food is returning to her native land, Canaan, she makes plans to return [Ruth 1:6]. Her two daughters-in-law are given the option of returning home to their families, but Ruth commits to Naomi and follows her back to Israel. Yet we know the duo would not remain as vulnerable widows following this disaster. The book of Ruth tells us that, Boaz, a wealthy kinsman of the late Elimelech, comes to Ruth's aid with food, provision and protection [2:1-23] and ultimately uses his resources to redeem her through marriage [4:1-15]. Similar to the Joseph chronicle, this is an example of a more powerful party averting a disaster. Though he was not in a position to prevent the original disaster, he was able to remove the impact of the disaster by initiating a compassionate response to Ruth's predicament.

Wright uses this narrative as a clear illustration of the impact of a catastrophe upon the welfare of a people group, though the effect is shown to be somewhat mitigated by effective forethought and

response mechanisms. We see here two principles at work: the wisdom of a savings reserve in order to weather forthcoming calamities [both anticipated and unforeseen], and the need for rapid intervention and relief, including the sharing of resources, in order to preserve the sanctity of human life. It is an example of a type of poverty potentially leading to death [47:19] – the importance of which is understood by Joseph and Boaz, who both act decisively and thoroughly to avert this disaster. Though the primary impetus comes from the two aforementioned men [the one with access to the necessary resources], they by no means act independently of those that they are helping. Joseph, Boaz and the people at risk worked cooperatively to make the most of the communal resources available, including the people's labour resources.

The Job chronicle

The narrative of Job is the final Old Testament text that Wright uses to support the natural cause theory. Unfortunately, Wright does mention the book of Job in his writing, but reduces it to the oversimplified scenario of when 'disaster can reduce a man to a rubbish tip' (Wright, 2004 p. 169). We see that the book of Job offers a far greater insight into the aetiology of poverty than has been presented.

The book of Job is rather enigmatic – penned by an unknown author at an unconfirmed time, and conveying the story of an unfamiliar protagonist living in an unidentified location [Uz] – yet it nevertheless remains a masterful biblical piece which has become synonymous with pain, suffering and hardship (Hartley, 1988 pp. 66-67). The narrative of the story is familiar to us. The book opens with Job presented as a man of unblemished character and piety, and in familiar Old Testament custom, is blessed richly with family and possessions [Job 1:1-6]. The scene moves swiftly to the heavenly court, where God challenges the accusatory figure of Satan to find any flaw in Job's character [1:8]. Unable to do so, Satan declares that Job's goodness is based on self-interest and that it would quickly fail should he lose God's protection and blessing [1:10-11]. God responds by permitting Satan to first strip Job of his family and possessions, and then to assault him with painful and intolerable disease [1:12; 2:5-6]. In a short and furious attack, Job loses his family, possessions and health – and is left in a position of dire poverty [1:21]. The next forty chapters cover Job's response to such a tragedy: his pain and lament, the "wise advice" of his friends, his memories of his great past, his assertion of innocence and integrity, and most emphatically, his wrestle with a

sovereign God who seems disinterested in easing his agony or offering a timely reason for his poverty and torment.

The book of Job is unique to our discussion as it offers the best – if not only – biblical text from the perspective of someone personally experiencing poverty [section 2.5 addresses the question ‘Is there a “voice of the poor” in the Bible?’].²⁷ As a personal account, Job’s chronicle is somewhat unique in that it shows us the multidimensional nature of his poverty. His suffering deeply reached every sphere of his existence: physical, as he loses his family, wealth and health [1:13-14; 2:8-10]; social, as he is alienated from his remaining family and friends and sits in shame on an ash heap outside the city walls, becoming the object of scorn [2:7-8; 16:10; 30:1-15; 19:13-19] and betrayal from his friends [6:14-23]; spiritual, as he is terrified by God’s silence [23:8]; and emotional, as he feels the full range of negative human emotions and groans that his soul is ‘bitter’ [7:11; 10:1; 27:2].

As a personal account, it also delivers a number of formidable comments on the aetiology of poverty. Because Job is presented as ‘blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil’ [Job 1:1, c.f. 33:9] and by no means lazy or indulgent [1:4-5], we are forced to look for reasons of poverty other than an individual’s own sinfulness. As Hartley (1988 p. 47) observes, ‘calamity is not necessarily a hostile witness against a righteous person’s integrity.’

Job’s two-level dialogue/complaint [with God and with the “wise” others] aids us in this search by contrasting sharply with Proverbs [which will be explored more fully from p. 56] not only in style, but also in content. Pleins (2001 p. 500) argues that the Book of Job counters the essential wisdom teachings concerning the causes of poverty, through its comments concerning a) the exploitation

²⁷ The Book of Job has been a strong source of inspiration for Gustavo Gutierrez, widely regarded as the founder of Liberation theology. Gutierrez maintains that the book offers a precise voice of the poor and articulates the concerns of the poor in the midst of their poverty. More specifically, Job offers us insight as to ‘how to speak to God in the midst of suffering’ [p. 13], in a way that ‘could have only been written by someone who had suffered in flesh and spirit’ [p. 14]. See GUTIÉRREZ, G. 1987. *On Job: God-talk and the suffering of the innocent*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books.

David J. A. Clines, however, presents a diametrically opposed view. In Clines’ interpretation, the Book of Job is not a story about a poor man, neither is it written by a poor man. Rather, it is ‘a story about a rich man but also by a rich man’ [pp. 125-126]. Job is a wealthy man who loses his wealth, but never truly becomes poor: Clines argues that Job can still support his wife and friends; he still has servants; is never truly hungry; and still maintains an authoritative voice among his friends. More forcefully, Clines asserts the ‘overwhelming concern of the character Job with status rather than survival betrays a narrator... who knows nothing of real poverty and therefore cannot envisage poverty as a moral criticism of wealth. Job’s suffering, mental and physical, is “real” enough; for rich people can suffer pain as deeply as poor people. But rich authors cannot truly imagine poverty, and the depiction of Job’s poverty is as a consequence unrealistic and unconvincing by comparison with the depiction of his suffering.’ To Clines, rather than a commentary empowering the poor, Job serves to support the wealthy classes who have been temporarily impoverished and to assure them that their privilege remains their entitlement. Job’s escape from poverty at the climax of the chronicle was not through industriousness or the assistance of others, but through the work of the Lord [Job 42:10] signifying, to Clines, that short of a miracle, the poor will remain poor as a matter of fait accompli. See p. liii of CLINES, D. J. A. 1989. *Job. 1-20*, Dallas, Tex., Word Books. See also pp. 126, 131 of CLINES, D. J. A. 1995. *Interested parties : the ideology of writers and readers of the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield, Sheffield Acad. Press.

of the poor, b) the process of accumulating wealth in society, and c) solidarity with the poor. Two of Job's friends, Eliphaz the Temanite and Zophar the Namathite, boldly assert that Job's suffering is a direct result of his own indiscretions and disobedience towards God [Job 22:5-7. 9-11; 20:15, 18-23a]. In particular, they claim his wickedness has come in the form of exploiting the poor: denying water to the thirsty; bread to the hungry; crushing and torturing the poor. As we will see in Wright's comments on oppression [from p. 60], this type of talk is far more at home in the world of the prophetic, where exploitation is the first explanation for poverty. Yet Job rejects their claims [29:7-10, 12, 16; 31:16, 19, 21-22], and God Himself strongly rebukes Eliphaz and Zophar as the tale draws to a close in chapter 42.

The second comment of the Job story concerns the accumulation of wealth and the converse fall into poverty: how does this happen? This is problematic for the writer of Job, for the wicked seem to accumulate wealth and live to enjoy it:

Their descendants are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes, their houses are safe from fear... His ox mates without fail; his cow calves and does not abort. They send forth their little ones like the flock, and their children skip about... They spend their days in prosperity... [Job 21:8-9a, 10-11, 13a].

Yet, the major complaint of Job is not the state of being wealthy, but the wicked means to achieve it [Job 24:1-4]. The wicked accumulate wealth by oppressing and exploiting the masses. In strong contrast to other wisdom writing, poverty is a question of exploitation – not industriousness or laziness.

Job's final comment on poverty, in the view of Pleins (2001 p. 503), is the need for solidarity with the poor. In the opening verses of Job 21 we see Job pleading for the ears of his mockers; that they might listen to him amidst his pain. In this, we see a strong example of the ease with which a distance can be created between the poor and others in society – and a reminder to remain united with those experiencing poverty. In Job, the roots of poverty seem to be exploitation, oppression and unjust judgements against the poor, signalled here by the void between Job and his mockers. Yet it is evident from the opening chapters that his poverty is caused by the spiritual rebellion of another. Though part of the wisdom literature, Job represents a challenge to wisdom thinking; though referenced by Wright under the title of natural causes, Job indicates that poverty is by no means "natural". Rather, Job's analysis is at home with the prophetic writing in both its thrust and

vocabulary (Pleins, 2001 p 506), as we will see in our section dealing with the cause of oppression [from p. 60].

2.3.b Laziness

We see that Wright's references for laziness are found in the book of Proverbs. We will thus give an overview to the context of the piece of writing before engaging with each reference individually on a textual basis. The book of Proverbs is a somewhat unique biblical text. The Proverbs are considered part of a larger collective group known as the 'wisdom literature', and are short, pithy statements that are usually applicable in many scenarios. This differentiates them from the longer monologues/dialogues usually associated with Ecclesiastes and Job. The Proverbs are commonly known to follow a typical form of parallelism, common to Hebrew poetic discourse. An awareness of these formats allows the reader to gain a more thorough understanding of the purpose of each saying.

The book of Proverbs is a didactic collection of sayings that, although based firmly on 'the fear of the Lord' [1:7], is not exclusively religious. Rather the author concerns himself with issues relating to normal human community. The focus is primarily on personal behaviour rather than national activities and is often seen as sound advice that can be applied cross-culturally and cross-generationally in order to avoid failure and achieve success.

While King Solomon is introduced as the author of the piece [1:1], most would agree that the writings are a collection of sayings from a number of intellectual sources, including Agur, Lemuel and a source known as the 'Instruction of Amenemope', which is known to be an Egyptian document written between 1580 and 1100 BC (Murphy, 1998). It is assumed that Solomon had gathered the writings prior to his heart turning from God, as he frequently reveals a Godly and righteous perspective (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994 p. 938, see also MacArthur, 1997 p. 874). Let us now review Wright's supporting scriptures.

Laziness leading to impoverishment; hard work leading to prosperity

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues vain things lacks sense [Proverbs 12:11].

In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty [Proverbs 14:23].

Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food [Proverbs 20:13].

He who loves pleasure *will become* a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich [Proverbs 21:17].

We see here the definitive proverbial exhortation towards hard work. The worker of 12:11, who strives hard in a productive activity, will see his basic needs met [though the 'vain' things are not expounded upon]. The fruitless talk of 14:23 leads to the **מִקְסוֹר** type of poverty – simple lack, though not specifically destitute poverty. This idle-talker may espouse grand ideas and proposals, but in the long term they gain very little and are left in want. Interestingly, when used in the book of Proverbs, **מִקְסוֹר** is always preceded by certain individual actions: too much slumber [Proverbs 6:10-11, 24:33-34]; withholding more than appropriate [11:24]; idle chatter without labour [14:23]; hasty plans [21:5]; a love of wine and oil [21:17]; oppressing the poor and favouring the rich [22:16]; and withholding giving from the poor [28:27] are all cited in Proverbs as precursors to **מִקְסוֹר**. Here profit comes to, and remains with, the diligent and the self-controlled.

The over-sleeper will also experience **יָרֵשׁ**. Whilst sleeping comfortably, this individual will eventually arise to see that more industrious individuals have dispossessed him of his wealth. Proverbs 11:29 and 12:24 support the possibility of losing one's inheritance to another, even to a household slave. This situation would be easily avoided by staying alert and busy.

There is a strong element of personal morality and responsibility in the concept of **יָרֵשׁ** poverty.

Leviticus 18:24-28 indicates that the morality of a people group allows them to either occupy a land or be expelled from it:

Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you [for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled]; so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you [Leviticus 18:24-28].

Here, the land of Canaan disposed its inhabitants [the Canaanites] because of their sin, and was repossessed by Israel on the basis of their obedience to Yahweh, with a promise of eternal occupation – and the enjoyment of the wealth and protection that occupancy brings – as a result of their continual obedience [1 Chronicles 28:8]. God's role in such redistribution of wealth is unambiguous; following the birth of her desired son, Samuel, Hannah offered a prayer of thanksgiving: 'The LORD makes poor [יָרֵשׁ], and rich; He brings low, He also exalts' [1 Samuel 2:7].

This notion of יָרֵשׁ poverty – deprivation due to immorality and sin – is a conspicuous feature of the book of Proverbs [20:13, 23:21], which speaks of the lazy, drunkard and glutton coming to יָרֵשׁ - a likely reference to an individual's wealth being transferred to others due to their indolence. Unlike prior forms of poverty, the יָרֵשׁ are deprived because of their own actions, and this can only be prevented by persistent submission to the will of God, including that of self-diligence in work activities.

Keller's extension to the notes from Proverbs adds the established observation of the hard-working ant:

Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer *and* gathers her provision in the harvest [Proverbs 6:6-8].

This verse, as part of the wisdom literature, does not provide a direct comment on the state of poverty. The adjective 'sluggard' implies laziness and sloth and is in general a degrading label. As an antithetical proverb, it is best understood when contrasting the sluggard to the industrious ant, who will have provision during the testing months to come. The ant is shown to be self-motivated, needing no oversight to encourage it to tend to itself. While we might draw significance from this passage, we hold that it is not specifically addressing the issue of poverty.

In addition to Wright's 'laziness', we see that Keller has chosen to add the dishonourable trait of 'a lack of self-discipline.'

For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe *one* with rags [Proverbs 23:21].

Using a classic piece of synonymous parallelism, the writer has endeavoured to specify a direct cause/effect relationship between an absence of self-discipline [exhibited by heavy drinking and excessive eating] and poverty. The term used for poverty is *שִׁרְיָה*, which we have seen to potentially indicate a form of dispossession. The one with a lack of self-discipline will literally be dispossessed of what wealth they have, and it will be transferred to another. Murphy (1998 p. 176) sees this as a ‘reasonable prospect for such conduct in any culture.’

We see that laziness [and Keller’s extension, indolence] as a significant view of poverty causation is unique to the book of Proverbs – it is entirely absent from the prophetic literature. Perhaps this should not surprise us, considering the use of *רִינָה*, *רִנָּה* and *מְקִסוֹר* is frequent and almost unique to the book of Proverbs. As we have briefly discussed earlier, understanding the authorship of the book of Proverbs has influenced the reading of its normative dictation. Those on side with Pleins argue that the author[s] of Proverbs are most likely of a wealthy, broadly upper-class heritage, living at a time of incredible national peace and prosperity and enjoying all the trappings of a wealthy and successful monarchy. It is likely that they would have considered this success to be beneficial, or have trickled down, to all of society. For these wise [educated] writers of the Proverbs, poverty in Israel at the time was therefore something that could be averted through self-discipline and personal industry, and its pinch can and should be avoided by the wise at any cost. Pleins even goes one step further, accusing the writers of launching a ‘veritable attack on the poor’, and for seeing the role of the poor as primarily to function as a dreadful warning of the consequences of laziness (Pleins, 2001 p. 437). We will see the words and the beliefs of the book of Proverbs are surprisingly consistent with Rowntree’s description of the ‘undeserving poor’ discussed in section 3.2.c.

However, those who side with Houston strongly rebuke this claim. Though he admits to seeing correlations between poverty and laziness, Houston sees this approach to be too problematic to be outright convincing. It may be that there are many things that bring one to poverty, but the book of Proverbs is lacking any condemnatory remarks on the position of the poor and how they have brought poverty upon themselves. Rather, it takes a somewhat sympathetic view to many of those in poverty. The book also makes no mention of how an ongoing class of poor people became poor

to begin with; the Proverbs only speak of how the wealthy act in order to become poor. There is no theory of class division, just an acceptance that it exists (Houston, 2004 p. 233, Houston, 2006 p. 121). Similarly there is no call to end the class division, just an exhortation to relieve the consequences of it when possible. In this light, the Proverbs are in a prime position to remind younger generations of the ruling classes that they have a social responsibility towards the poor.

2.3.c Oppression

Wright's identification of the oppressive causes of poverty comes in six forms. Of these, three are types of exploitation and three are forms of corruption.

i. Exploitation of the socially weak

Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."

Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?"

And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil."

Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few. And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full." So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured.

When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel."
And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest." [2 Kings 4:1-7]

Wright uses this passage as an example of a person who is socially weak, and thus vulnerable to the actions of the unscrupulous. The book of 2 Kings was originally part of a single volume with 1 Kings, but was divided during the translation process into the Septuagint. Both books contain the history of Judah's and Israel's kingship from Saul to Zedekiah, and were written between 561-538 BC [during the exile]. The volume includes Solomon's accession and reign [1 Kings 1-11] and the division of the monarchy [1 Kings 12], and interprets the people's experience of the exile – giving an account for their punishment [2 Kings 17:13-23, 21:10-15].

The 'woman' featured in this simplistic narrative is in a precarious position. With the death of her husband, she is now found to be devoid of her primary source of provision and protection, and she is vulnerable to her creditors. A default would see her fall subject to perhaps the most oppressive

aspect of ANE loaning – the seizure of the debtor or their children. Though such a seizure of wives and children was legally endorsed, biblical law enforced regulations to curtail abuse [Exodus 21:7-10], and detainment would only persist until the year of Jubilee [Leviticus 25:39-40].

Evidence presented by Houston (2006 p. 28), however, suggests it is likely that wealthier people would often engage in lending in order to gain the prestige associated through amassing clients, or as a means to acquire labour. He argues that the translation ‘creditor’ in verse 1 fails to carry the full insinuations behind the word **הַשֹּׁאֵל**. The Revised English Bible translates it as ‘moneylender’, which might be seen as a better word to capture the essence of loaning with the intent to exploit (p. 110). In the event of a default, a creditor would simply enforce annexation laws at a time of his choosing, seizing his debtor without the expectation of first applying for a court deliberation. It was the debtor’s responsibility to appeal against the actions of the creditor, and this typically carried a small likelihood of success. As Houston observes, this account exemplifies a time marked by the ‘deliberate striving by a privileged element in society to entrench their privilege through the exploitation, subordination, and humiliation of the rest’ (p. 28).

The prophet Elisha’s reply of ‘What shall I do?’ indicates a degree of his helplessness to overrule the pending foreclosure. Though it was not in his power to veto the law, it was in his power to make the law inapplicable, and in doing so outwork the ethic behind the command to ‘open your hand’ and ‘generously lend him sufficient for his need’ [Deuteronomy 15:8]. In this instance, the widow’s need was to avoid the creditor and the prophet provided her with a new source of wealth [oil], empowering her to repay her creditor, avert seizure and remain free. The stronger person that she turned to in her distress became her emancipator, rather than her exploiter.

ii. Exploitation of the economically weak

If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbour’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear *him*, for I am gracious [Exodus 22:25-27].

The book of Exodus, also historically credited to Moses, marks the end of the period of oppression for Abraham’s descendants and constitutes the beginning of the fulfilment of the covenant promise of inheritance, multiplication and nationalization. Following their departure from Egypt [Chapters

12-14] and the crossing of the Red Sea [Chapter 14], the Israelites encamped at Mount Sinai [Chapters 19-40]. The theology of deliverance and salvation is strongly emphasized throughout the book of Exodus, and it lays the foundation for the redemption theology of the New Testament. God's reoccurring message of 'I will surely hear his cry...' [e.g. Exodus 22:23] is a continual reminder of God's compassionate and salvific act on behalf of the oppressed Hebrew people and characterizes this piece of writing. During the encampment, God prescribes His law, in which our chosen verse is found.

Exodus 22 appears amidst what is often referred to as the 'Book of the Covenant' – a series of laws regarding such far-reaching topics as violence, animal control, property, justice and observing the Sabbath – and is found in Exodus 20:19 to 23:33. Barker and Kohlenberger (1994) view two types of law in these passages. The first type is conditional, and follows a typical 'if/when... then' pattern. The second type takes a categorical, unconditional form and usually comprises of a negative command or prohibition [such as those offered in the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20]. This passage provides two examples of the 'if/when' [conditional] type of law: 'If you lend money...' [22:25] and 'If you ever take your neighbour's cloak...' [22:26]. In both cases, we observe that God is not prohibiting these actions, rather He is recognizing that it may occur in the community and is therefore putting safeguards in place to regulate the activity.

From Exodus 22:21, we see a series of commandments and prohibitions connected to the protection of vulnerable and defenceless people groups within the community, which is known as a common theme in the teaching of the Old Testament (Durham, 1987). In verse 25, the primary Hebrew word of interest here is עֲנִי, which we have seen to represent the afflicted poor: the person who is in a state of poverty because of direct oppression or infliction from another. This person, referred to as 'My people', should be thought of as a fellow Israelite who through the exigencies of existence has come under the influence of a more powerful person: the creditor. Furthermore, some have seen fit to read 'the poor among you' to be 'the poor man who is dependent on you', adding further weight to the insistence that the powerful should not cause further pain to those who would not, or could not, dare to resist (Houston, 2006 p. 115, Houtman, 2000 p. 247).

Though charging interest was not universally forbidden [see Leviticus 25:25-37], the Israelite receiving this command is instructed not to add to the burdens of a poor person by imposing a

further economic handicap in the form of usury. Both Wright (1983 p. 84) and Houtman (2000 p. 218) agree that this instance refers to a consumption loan required out of genuine need [rather than, say, to facilitate commercial trading], and thus the loaner is prevented from using their position of power to take economic advantage of a needy person. To be in a position to lend to others was a sign of blessing [c.f. Deuteronomy 28:44], and a willingness to offer a loan without the desire for self-enrichment was considered exemplary conduct for an Israelite, giving evidence of their virtuosity.

In Exodus 22:26, the language changes significantly from a poor person to a neighbour. The second benefactor of this command, the neighbour, should also be considered a fellow Israelite, friend or companion. There is no indication in this text that this person is severely disadvantaged, though the reference to a pledge may mean that they are offering their coat as some form of security, perhaps as a guarantee for a loan. As the loaner ran a very real risk of not having the loan repaid, requesting a pledge was not, in itself, a dishonourable practice [e.g. Deuteronomy 24:10-11]. It is unlikely that the cloak itself was of equal value to the loan offered by the creditor, but, as it would have been of considerable value to the debtor, the creditor would nevertheless retain it for 'probative purposes' to ensure payment (Houston, 2006 p. 111).

However, certain restrictions were to be observed in order to cap the power-advantage of the creditor. Already we have seen that the loaner must not reduce the pledge-giver to a substandard living by causing further impairment to one who is already in a vulnerable position. We see that withholding their coat overnight would not only lead to immediate discomfort, but also possible further disadvantage with the potential for sickness, or a decline in work aptitude the following day due to a poor night's sleep. Additionally, being unclothed was a sign of disgrace, of being deprived of basic human dignity [Genesis 9:20-24]. Furthermore, the creditor was prohibited from attempting to seize such property from the debtor's house, but rather had to wait upon him to deliver it to him [Deuteronomy 24:10-11], and such a pledge was not to be taken from a widow at all [Deuteronomy 24:17].

Tying these two commands together is most likely to result in a restriction to the use of power to disadvantage others: where a man owns a coat [indicating that he is likely to be of reasonably similar social standing], do not disadvantage him by withholding it when he would get the most

benefit from it [at night], and when a man is potentially too poor to own a coat, or other property that one might see as desirable, do not attempt to find an additional way to disadvantage him by charging usury. This passage, when understood as a principle, is relatively straightforward: do not use the power you have over somebody in order to stimulate economic gain for yourself, at the expense and repression of others.

iii. Exploitation of the ethnically weak

Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt [Exodus 22:21].

With their historic enslavement at the hands of the Egyptians in close memory, the Israelites had a firm understanding of what it meant to be exploited as an ethnic minority. They had suffered first-hand the horrors of political, economic and social oppression, rendering them vulnerable to the point of state-sponsored genocide [Exodus 1]. Because of this memory, they are frequently warned to pay particular attention to the vulnerabilities of the ethnic minorities in their midst [see also Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:33]. We see here strong links between Yahweh's response to Israel's captivity in Exodus 3 and the oppressed of verse 22:23. Houtman makes a worthwhile observation here: the solution to the social problem of needy people was never intended to be strict structural measures [through the enforcement of firm laws or regulations], but an appeal to the conscience of wealthier Israelites. By bringing to memory their own redemption, the Israelites were encouraged to seek the redemption of others. In this way justice was not so much enforced, but taught. A society would only be fully just if the people desired to act justly (Houtman, 2000 p. 217, Houston, 2006 p. 107).

Who is the foreigner, the גֵּר, in this verse? In most cases, we would expect this person to be a non-Israelite settler in the land [as would seem appropriate from Exodus 12:48]. Houston agrees, but also suggests that in this early stage of Israeli nationalization, when society was still largely patrilineal and agricultural, this foreigner could just as well have been someone from another tribe or village – any uprooted Israelite (2006 p. 108). The exact definition is probably irrelevant, as the message is that any person away from the support and provision of their family-based social system deserves protection. Their low-standing in economic and judicial circles should not be exploited to degrade them further.

iv. Royal excess, corruption and abuse of power

Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness, and his upper rooms without justice, who uses his neighbour's services without pay and does not give him his wages [Jeremiah 22:13].

The use of this particular passage by Wright is mildly curious, as it makes only an implied reference to poverty. This prompts us to place the verse within its wider context. This passage is found in the prophet Jeremiah's denunciation of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, spanning from 22:11-23. Jehoiakim reigned in Judah from 609-597 BC, following the brief, 3 month reign of his brother, Jehoahaz. Prior to Jehoahaz, the brothers' father, Josiah, had reigned righteously between 639-609 BC. Jehoiakim himself is regarded as the worst and most ungodly of Judah's kings, known as a 'bloodthirsty tyrant' and an 'inveterate enemy of the truth' (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994 p. 1152). His reign was characterized by a disregard for the worship of God, exorbitant taxes and the extraction of forced labour for his building projects.

Jeremiah's scathing rebuke of Jehoiakim is contrasted with his generous praise of his father, Josiah, who had a reputation for pleading the case of the weak and needy [in fact, the closest specific reference to poverty in this passage concerns King Josiah, who did bring justice to the poor and needy, in verse 16]. The prophet contrasts Jehoiakim's view of kingship – splendid palaces and ostentatious works – with Josiah's righteous and reverent rule. In recognition of God's hatred of injustice – particularly amongst rulers – Jeremiah prophesizes the 'woe' that was to fall on Jehoiakim: upon his death there would be no lament [22:18] and instead of a royal funeral he would be buried outside the city gates like a donkey [22:19].

Craigie et al. (1991) notice the considerable ambiguity at the beginning of the oracle: Jehoiakim is not identified as the recipient until verse 18. There is no mention in the opening that it is a royal building, suggesting that at first the woe cry could be addressed to anyone who builds his house on unrighteousness. The 'neighbour' of verse 13 should be understood as a fellow compatriot or Israelite, as they are not referred to as poor in any of the usual manners that we have previously established. Whilst it is unclear why the neighbour agreed to assist the building without pay, the accusation of injustice remains. The semantic stress is more on the condition of the builder – one who is operating without צִדִּיק [righteousness] or מִשְׁפָּט [justice]. His functioning is peripheral to God's recognized norm and his actions are not conducive to building social harmony. In verse 21

we see that God had spoken to them in their time of prosperity and security, but they had refused to listen and instead favoured a life of disobedience.

Though not a specific reference to poverty, we see here a prophetic denunciation of the use of power – especially royal power – to enrich oneself at the expense of another. Rodd (2000 p. 178) concludes that a very real and expected part of kingly rule was the protection of the poor, especially the widows and orphans. To ignore their plight, or worse, to exacerbate it, was to ridicule the concern for the poor evident in God's divine kingship. This again suggests that God is as much interested in the heart condition of the wealthy and powerful, as He is the financial position of the poor and needy. There is an underlying expectation that the powerful should not take advantage of the powerless, and any action that exacerbates social discord should be considered a blight against the very character of God.

v. *Judicial corruption and false accusation (I)*

Therefore because you impose heavy rent on the poor and exact a tribute of grain from them, though you have built houses of well-hewn stone, yet you will not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, yet you will not drink their wine. For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great, you who distress the righteous and accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate [Amos 5:11-12].

Writing in the eighth century BC, Amos arose neither as a prophet nor a prophet's son but rather as a herdsman and horticulturalist who was later appointed personally by God to prophesy [7:14-15]. His message was primarily one to the northern tribes of Israel, who were enjoying a time of relative prosperity under the long and secure reign of Jeroboam II. The external threats of Assyria had been subdued earlier that century and Israel experienced considerable peace amongst neighbouring people groups. Stuart (1987) observes that Israel at the time was likely to be reaching its peak in terms of economic prosperity.²⁸ Urbanization was proliferating, and those with the wealth

²⁸ It is worth noting that the understanding of most commentators that Israel was experiencing a unique time of prosperity is not without its critics. Archaeological records show negligible building activity during the eighth century, which is normally seen to be a key indicator of economic prosperity. See p. 48 of HOUSTON, W. J. 2006. *Contending for justice: ideologies and theologies of social justice in the Old Testament*, London, T&T Clark International.

Likewise, Dutch scholar Jan Kees de Geus interprets the archaeological remains of Israel and Palestine and concludes that the economic peak was reached in the ninth century BC, and thereafter a general economic decline had already begun to affect Israel and Judah. He argues that the inequalities Amos found to be so offensive may have been the result, not of recent prosperity acquired by some under Jeroboam's reign, but rather of a longer period of decline that bore most brutally on the poor.

As de Geus's writing is in German, we have relied on A. Graeme Auld's reflection on Geus. See AULD, A. G. 1986. *Amos*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark. particularly pp. 13, 68. See also DE GEUS, J. K. & DE GEUS, C. 1982. Die Gesellschaftskritik der Propheten und die Archäologie. *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 50-57.

to buy food from the countryside and sell it to captive audiences in the cities could make enormous profits if they so desired [many did, as is evident in 8:4-6]. Disproportionate affluence led to the formation of a leisured upper class who increasingly embraced a self-indulgent lifestyle [2:8; 4:1; 6:1-6]. Spiritually, however, the nation floundered on all socioeconomic levels. Such material prosperity was accompanied with rampant corruption and moral decay [2:7; 4:1; 5:10-13]. In particular, it was the exploitation of the poor and defenceless by the rich and powerful that is particularly exposed through Amos' oracles. After due warning, God was about to destroy the kingdom of Israel for its sins, which centred on social injustice (Houston, 2006).

This condemnation from the prophet Amos in 5:11-12 draws attention to the treatment of two types of poor: the **לָד** of verse 11 and the **אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן** of verse 12. For those too poor to own land, yet with enough resource to afford marginal rent required for a home [e.g. the **לָד**], landowners are criticized for attempting to extort excessively heavy and unfair rent upon them [5:11].²⁹ In verse 12, Amos criticizes the treatment of those further down the economic ladder: the **אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן**. As we have discussed, the **אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן** are those who are very poor materially, probably from some form of catastrophe or through the loss of their land. Given their frequent contrast with landowners, it is likely that the **אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן** would be without land of their own – a vital source of wealth and income in agrarian societies – and thus would have difficulty being self-sufficient (Botterweck 2004).

It is not surprising then to find this person located at the city gates. In a more recent work, Keller describes the gates as the boundary between the city, where systems of law and order were in place, and the rural land, where feudal disorder was the norm (Keller, 2012). The city gates thus provided a place where the judges meet in order to settle disputes and administer justice (MacArthur, 1997 p. 1282; cf. Amos 5:19, Deuteronomy 21:19, Joshua 20:4, see Stuart, 1987 p. 348). The **אֶבְיֹ֑וֹן** person sitting at the city gates was therefore likely to be very vulnerable and would seek the just protection of the decision-makers. However, Amos notes that, rather than extracting

²⁹ It is important to be aware here of the observations of Houston in the difficulty presented in properly understanding the complexities of the landlord/tenant system, if indeed one did so exist. He states that in Classical Hebrew, there is a lack of the entire suite of words relating to such an institution. The words 'let', 'lease', 'rent', 'landlord' or 'tenant' have no equivalent in Hebrew, thus casting a shadow on our understanding of how such an institution may have existed in biblical times. See p. 23, HOUSTON, W. J. 2006. *Contending for justice: ideologies and theologies of social justice in the Old Testament*, London, T&T Clark International.

from them excessive rent or other advantage [as it is unlikely that this poor could offer any resource of interest], they were most likely just to be ignored – an act of further injustice.

Amos strongly denounces the act of the rich using their power to serve themselves. He opposes any method of squeezing the poor for extra money, or in the case that they are unable to gain any more advantage, of ignoring them altogether. In 5:12 he cries for justice to be established at the gate and whenever the disadvantaged are involved. Whilst it is very possible that the actions of the powerful here could have been considered permissible, or even legal, within their circles, Amos denounces them as immoral. This leads us to a very worthwhile point: if a poor person consents to entering into an [unfavourable] agreement, legal validity does not overrule its immorality – according to God's standards it remained ethically invalid. The Israelites were expected to act in accordance with God's standards, not the lowest standard which someone might accept under duress.

vi. Judicial corruption and false accusation (II)

We would like to take a moment to discuss a verse that is not mentioned by Wright as an example of judicial unfairness. However, it is referenced by Keller (2010 p. 7), and is a useful representation of this form of exploitation:

You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbour fairly [Leviticus 19:15].

Leviticus 19 forms part of what many scholars refer to as the 'Holiness Code', spanning from Leviticus 17-26 (cf. Joosten, 1996). The book of Leviticus opens following the construction of the tabernacle [Exodus 25-31; 35-40], at a time when Moses [traditionally regarded as the human author] had reorganized the nation, built up the military, established courts and law, and ordered formal worship. Leviticus offers detailed instruction on the worship of God and the conduct of the Israelite people, under the administration of the priests of the nation, the Levites. Barker and Kohlenberger (1994) argue that the Levitical laws should be best understood as defining the principles of [1] humanity's relationship to God, and [2] humanity's relationship to one another. By observing them through this lens, rather than as specific directives to contemporary society, we are better equipped to find significance for current issues and circumstances.

Theologically, Leviticus is concerned with the holiness of God contrasted with the sinfulness of humanity, resulting in the necessity of sacrifice and the on-going desire for cleanliness (Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994). In Leviticus 19, however, we find that the holiness demanded in verse two – ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’ – is surprisingly practical: the chapter is devoted to exhortations to be generous to the poor, provide justice for workers, behave considerately towards others, give immigrants an equal standing before the law, provide honest trading measures and so forth. Wright (1983 p. 27) observes that the recurrent refrain of ‘I am the Lord’ suggests that what God is saying is forthright: ‘This is what I require of you because this is what I myself would do’. We suggest that Leviticus 19 should therefore be read with the understanding of ‘this is what God would do’.

Linguistically, the ‘poor’ of Leviticus 19:15 is representative of the עני, or one who maintains a lower economic position, but is not necessarily in desperate need. The stress, however, is focused on the actions of the judge, not the position of the poor. The judge was commanded to ensure that no injustice in judgement would hinder his decision. The commandment was to always judge with righteousness: the process of accurately and fairly judging with the aim to restore relational harmony between the two parties. We know that any decisions out of line with true justice would effectively increase the relational barrier between the rich person and the poor person.

A superficial reading of Leviticus 19:15, or even Keller’s reflection, might lead us to think that the judge was instructed only to not favour the rich by resisting the temptation to ‘honour a great man when he comes to court’ (Houston, 2006 p. 115). However, we must bring clarity here. The command to the judge is not only to avoid favouritism to the conventionally powerful party [in this case, the rich], but the judge was also instructed not to show partiality to the poor. Through eyes of pity, the judge was not to afford the poor person special privileges or increase their power unfairly in the situation (Hartley, 1992). The call was for one of equality: a judge must ensure that neither the lower or higher classes were able to use their respective position of power to the unfair disadvantage of the other. He must administer justice impartially. This insistence on fair treatment at law is a regular theme of the biblical literature [cf. Exodus 23:1-3, 6-8; Deuteronomy 16:19-20; 19:15-21; 27:25; Psalm 72:2; Proverbs 16:13].

Given our interpretation of the importance of Leviticus 19:2, we therefore interpret 19:15 as offering a continuing principle, which is based in the very nature and character of God: when making decisions, ensure that the end goal is relational harmony between the two parties. Do not allow either party's power to unfairly influence your decision. Act in this way, as this is the way that God would act.

The development of the theme of oppression as the Old Testament unfolds is also of note. In the historical writings we see God strongly urging His people not to take advantage of those less powerful. By the time of the prophets, however, it seems apparent that the words had escalated from a directive to a comprehensive rebuke. It is possible that during the earlier times of Israel's history, economic resource was largely shared evenly throughout the community. Individual poverty and misery were unknown in the early family structure of Israel [for production and provision were a function of the community as a whole] and whilst there may have been rich and poor, it is unlikely that the difference between the two would have been great (Gerstenberger, 2004, and Wallis, 2010, this observation has been noted by Epsztein, 1986).

However, as Israel developed, grew and prospered, inequality likewise grew. Economic policies and the tax system of the Persian Empire are likely to have hastened the disbanding of the household links that had previously somewhat resisted such vulnerability. Wallis (see also Hay, 1989 p. 41) perceives a correlation between great material prosperity for some, yet hardship for others [as shown by archaeological records], and the arrival of the prophets, who were raised up to rally against the disparities. If we are to take this as accurate, this might offer insight into why God's instructions of the Pentateuch were largely instructive, whilst His words via the prophets were scornfully admonishing. It seems that in the early years, the guidance focused on, 'If poverty comes, do not make it worse' whereas as the success of the nation gathered momentum, it moved towards 'There is poverty because of your greed'.

2.4 Assessing Wright's Observations

Having explored Wright's observation of the texts relating to poverty causation in more detail, it is important to ask the question of adequacy: has Wright given a report on the topic from the Old Testament adequately? Are there any further texts that one should consider? Are there any that seem to have been excluded for some reason? Granted, we accept that this topic is hardly the

centre of Wright's interest or activity in *Old Testament ethics for the people of God*, for it occupies a mere four pages in his 520 page work. Nevertheless, as it *is* the centre of our work and activity, we should be diligent in looking for further or alternate references to the aetiology of poverty that might contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon.

It quickly becomes apparent that there are perhaps six more texts that should be of particular interest to us: the wandering Israelites who, having just been freed from Egypt, expected to die of hunger [Exodus 16:3]; the call for compassion when taking pledges [Exodus 22:26-27]; the redemption laws [Leviticus 25]; the right and obligation to work [Deuteronomy 24]; the promise of a curse upon Israel if they failed to be obedient to God's commandments, which includes references to poverty and lack [Deuteronomy 28:15-68, focussed on verses 38-44]; and the presumed impoverishment of the Canaanites as they were driven from their land [see Joshua 1]. We therefore see a need to expand the breadth of biblical sources in this conversation.

2.4.a Expanding the breadth of biblical sources

i. Exodus 16: The rebellious Israelites

On the 'fifteenth day of the second month' after their departure from Egypt [Exodus 16:1], the people of Israel began to complain ['grumble'] against Moses and Aaron [16:2]. Their complaint centred on a lack of food, insinuating that their leaders had bought them into the desert to starve and suggesting that they were better fed whilst still in slavery in Egypt [16:3]. Their outcry indicates a situation of desperate poverty: they had neither the money nor the means to access food to feed themselves.

That Wright has left this text from his overview is of little surprise: among the literature, and particularly in the poverty discussion, this short passage is frequently overlooked. Even some of the better-known commentators (Houston, 2001, Childs, 2004, Meyers, 2005, see also Gerstenberger, 2015) make little reference to the social conditions at play here, instead rather focussing on either the Israelites rebellion in pining for the enslavement of Egypt, or the lesson on the absolute dependency on God required in this new era. Stuart (2006 pp. 370-371), however, expands the review further, commenting that after a month of travelling, the Israelites would have seen their stocks grow thin and feared that the prospects of finding food or adequate pastures were slimming also. He sees the claim that in Egypt they 'ate to the full' as probably an exaggeration, but not

completely baseless: as cattle farmers up until the point of the Exodus, the Israelites may have eaten meat on a regular, if not daily, basis. Now, however, the group had been removed from the pasturelands of Egypt and into a less fertile wilderness, and their impoverishment was becoming more genuine by the day.

The experience of the Israelites in the wilderness is an important, if not well-developed, passage that feasibly should have been added to Wright's catalogue on texts relating to poverty. Though dependency on God is a very real theme here, in absolute terms this text speaks of poverty that is experienced by an inability to produce for oneself, due to inhospitable land conditions.

ii. *Exodus 22: A call for compassion*

Wright's assessment of natural causes noticeably only referred to narrative texts. However, we see further evidence of this type of thinking as we explore normative passages of Scripture. A notable occasion can be found in Exodus, where the Israelite is instructed to return, before sunset, the cloak that he had received from his neighbour as a pledge:

If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious [Exodus 22:26-27; a comparable instruction is found in Deuteronomy 24:12-13].

This passage follows on the heels of instructions concerning the oppression of foreigners and the exploitation of widows and describes God's concern that the cloak-less person – someone so poor that they had to put up an essential item as a pledge – will experience discomfort in their sleep, and cry out to God. The Hebrew term that has been translated as 'cries out' is one that signifies great distress: it is a cry of the anguished person, in anticipation of a compassionate response from those who hear his call (Harris et al., 1980 #1947, Strong, 2009 H6817; also seen in Genesis 4:10, 41:55; Exodus 8:12; Lamentations 2:18). Foreseeing a misfortune should the person sleep without the protection of a cloak, the Israelite is instructed to act in a way that will adequately prevent the suffering. All measures should be taken to ensure that the potential for this type of disaster is averted before it arises. While this passage is not a direct commentary on why the individual concerned is poor, it does comment on how one's impoverished position can be exacerbated by the actions of others.

iii. *Leviticus 25: The redemption laws*

When the Israelites had reached the Promised Land, God had distributed land to the 12 tribes [Joshua 13:7; 23:4]. In Leviticus 25 we find instructions devoted to establishing the years of Sabbath [giving rest to the land every seven years] and Jubilee [returning the land to its ancestral owners every 50 years]. The purpose of the Jubilee law was to keep the land in the hands of the tribes and families to which He had given the land in the first place in order to prevent the utter ruin of debtors (Wenham, 1979 p. 317). If a man incurred a debt that he could not repay, he could be forced to sell his land or personal freedom by becoming a slave. The Jubilee laws placed a limit on this: in effect a debtor would rent his land to another, who would pay a lump sum in advance as if buying the land. The lump sum could then be used to repay the debt, but the land was returned to the original owners every 49th year, restricting the situation whereby the rich could accumulate more and the poor become enslaved more, *ad infinitum*. Rooker states:

The primary reason that these laws have been incorporated...is that debt was the greatest internal threat to the social foundation of the equality of the Israelites... [and] sought to guard this egalitarian ideal amidst the forces of fortune and misfortune that over time caused some to become rich and others to become poor... for it enabled every released Israelite debtor-slave to return to his patrimony, free and clear, where he could again support his family (Rooker, 2000 pp. 424-425).

The theological motivation for this return of land is found in Leviticus 25:23 – “The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me.” As true owner of the land, God maintained the right to apportion it to whomever He desired for their benefit.

A look at the Hebraic nuances of Leviticus 25 also shows the exclusive use of the Hebrew word מֵקֵץ – which we have seen to make reference to the process of becoming poor. It is interesting to note that the only Hebrew word to make reference to the dynamics of poverty is found exclusively in a chapter devoted to halting the dynamics of becoming poor.³⁰ Furthermore, we see that in each reference [25:25, 25:35, 25:39, 25:47], there is an explicit instruction to a stronger party coming to their assistance – in the form of redeeming slaves, buying back property, or providing accommodation and employment. We see here a principle being affirmed: not only are stronger parties expected to resist the exploitation of weaker parties, but at the first strike of poverty they are

³⁰ Four of the five uses of *mûk* occur in Leviticus 25. The fifth occurrence is in Leviticus 27 and is translated in the NASB as ‘poorer’ and is understood as contextually different.

expected to come to their assistance. This is to help prevent the dynamic process of impoverishment from taking a merciless hold.

The ideal of the Jubilee year was to ensure that poverty would be addressed immediately and never become generational, all families would be allowed a fresh start with the resources needed to provide for themselves, and that there would be a sense of recapturing the equality between men that existed at creation (Wenham, 1979 p. 317). Yet Wenham laments that this institution was probably rarely realized: the rebukes of Isaiah to those who 'join field to field until there is no more room' [Isaiah 5:8] would indicate that by the later monarchy period it was no longer observed.

iv. Deuteronomy 24: The right and obligation to work

Given that the first humans were required to work before the Fall [Genesis 1:28; 2:15], it should be understood that engaging in productive work is an opportunity for one to reflect the image of God. Hay sees this as mankind's 'right and obligation to work' (1989 p. 73), and we have seen this to be protected by the provisions of the Law: those who have lost their land should be given an opportunity to work by another member of the family [Leviticus 25:25]; and those without family should be allowed gleaning rights in the fields and vineyards [Deuteronomy 24:19-22]. It would seem that all attempts should be made to accept the opportunity of productive work that corresponds to self-sufficiency.

In Deuteronomy 24, a section dedicated to providing care and compassion for the underprivileged, we find what is frequently referred as the 'Gleaning Rights':

When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.

When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing [Deuteronomy 24:19-22].

Landholding Israelites, who would have provided for themselves and their families through the harvest of their property, were instructed to allow poor residents to also benefit from their produce. They were forbidden from double-reaping: the first portion reaped in their land was rightfully theirs,

but any further remaining, un-reaped yields must be left to the aliens, orphans and widows. The poor were then permitted to freely and lawfully gather and reap the surplus for their own benefit.

As a general rule, the land of Israel was inalienably tied to the family of the male to whom it was allotted and this particular triad of individuals – the alien, the widow and the orphan – would have been landless and destitute without outside opportunities.³¹ However, it is expected that the gleaning laws of Deuteronomy would have sought to stem the tide of failure by allowing the landless access to the very resource that they needed to be productive – the land.

However, in a passage removed from his discourse on poverty, Wright makes an interesting observation of this command in his commentary of the verse, particularly when read in the context of the surrounding passage. Noting the opening injunction of verse 17, ‘You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan...’, it seems likely that this extends as a command to the whole section: each of the subsequent instructions should be understood in the light of this initial command to not pervert the justice of the poor. Wright contends that the use of מִשְׁפָּט [translated as ‘justice’ in the NASB] would be accurately understood as the rights due to a poor person, indicating that the rules to follow were not a matter of charity, but of entitlements. The poor have a claim not only to the fruit of the harvest, but also to the productive work involved in harvesting. It seems that God was not only interested in feeding the poor, but also in engaging them in the dignity of industrious work. Wright drives this point home: they [the poor] are to have the opportunity to work for their own benefit in the fields of God’s land. Those who do not, for various reasons, have a share of the ownership of the land are still to be given the chance to share in the blessing of working the land (Wright, 2012). Wright’s reflection on this in contemporary times is poignant:

The law asks us... to find means of ensuring that the weakest and poorest in the community are enabled to have access to the opportunities they need in order to be able to provide for themselves. “Opportunities” may include financial resources, but could include access to education, legal assistance, invest in job opportunities etc. (Wright, 2012 p. 261).

³¹ We are aware of discrepancies with this tenet: Genesis 38:11 reports that the widow Tamar returned to the care of her parents; Proverbs 23:10 indicates orphans could at times inherit land; Leviticus 25:47 infers that a foreigner could become wealthy. Gowan provides an interesting review of these and other occurrences. See GOWAN, D. E. 1987. Wealth and poverty in the Old Testament: the case of the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner. *Interpretation*, 41, 341-353.

There is a genuine concern for the poor who have insufficient access to the resources necessary to maintain self-sufficiency, let alone to generate wealth. God addresses this by requiring the Israelites to share the opportunities and resources that are at their disposal.

v. *Deuteronomy 28: The curses of God for disobedience*

The 'Blessings and Curses' passage of Deuteronomy 28 contains an address from Moses during the renewal of the covenant on the plains of Moab. The fact that Wright overlooks this passage is problematic, as it does present perhaps the most palpable reference to poverty arising directly because of disobedience to God's law. Early in the chapter, we see that obedience to God's law would be met with social and economic prosperity:

The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow [Deuteronomy 28:11-12].

However, in contrast to the rich picture painted for the Israelites of the blessing of God in response to obedience, the consequences of disobedience would be shattering. The curses parallel the blessings and extend into every sphere of life: urban and rural life; fertility in man, the ground and animals; the provision of household necessities; and miscellaneous daily activities. Craigie (1976) observes that disobedience to the law would result in God afflicting the people with a series of calamities that would ultimately lead to their deaths (p. 342). Pestilence, human infections, plant disease, social disorder, drought, defeat in war, consumption by wild birds, insanity, victimisation, oppression, enslavement and the loss of children are but a few of the terrors that would befall the Israelites. Perhaps even more horrifying would be immoral actions of the Israelites as they began to suffocate under the weight of the curses – 28:53 paints a picture of a siege so pronounced that parents would cannibalize their children and, even more shockingly, that parents 'will not give even one of them [his own children] any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, since he has nothing else left' [28:55]. This text, of course, is not merely a baseless threat, for it lays the foundations for the centuries to follow: the successes and failures of the kingly regimes, the invasions and exiles, the Diaspora and the history of the remnant returning to Jerusalem are all reconcilable with this passage.

It is undeniable that the result of the curses would be poverty of the worst imaginable type. This places us at a decisive crossroad – where do we place the aetiology for this poverty? Who is to blame: the Israelites or God? In his own commentary on Deuteronomy, Wright seems to find it easiest to avoid entering the debate too strongly: the closest he gets is by stating ‘they will then bring the curses upon themselves’ (Wright, 2012 p. 282). Many commentators (Mayes, 1981, Barker and Kohlenberger, 1994, Von Rad, 1966) steer clear altogether. Jewish commentator Jeffrey Tigay, however, is happy to concede that God Himself is the author of the conditions of the curses, thus unavoidably positioning Him as the cause of this poverty (Tigay, 1996 p. 261). Bultmann (2001 p. 152) quietly agrees, though he does not explain his position further.

Yet Currid (2006 p. 438) and Craigie hold that the curses are simply God’s response to Israel’s actions, therefore the causes of this poverty is still man, his forgetfulness and his disobedience:

The root cause of the disaster would be forgetfulness... the people would forget God, and in forgetting God they would forget His commandments. Having forgotten the commandments of God, the people would inevitably commit evil deeds and bring upon their own heads disaster. God sends the curse... but man invites it by his deeds (Craigie, 1976 p. 342).

This raises a serious question that may have been missed by Wright: is God a cause of poverty? Sure, it can be seen that these Israelites were objects of at least two of Wright’s trio of causes – natural causes and oppression [laziness is doubtable] – but was God the actual cause of these causes? At this point in our thesis, however, it may be best to reply ‘it is possible’, and posit that supplementary investigation would be needed.

vi. Joshua 1: The purging of the Canaanites

Another instance of poverty that has escaped Wright’s attention is that assumed of the Canaanites following the dispossession of their land by the Israelites. God first promised the land of Canaan to the patriarchs [Genesis 12:6-7], reconfirmed His promise to the emerging tribes of Israel [Exodus 23:23-33, 34:11-16, Numbers 33:5-55 and Deuteronomy 7:1-2] and affirmed it to Joshua [Joshua 1:1-5]. The promise to possess the land required the removal of the land’s inhabitants, the Canaanites, who according to Jewish scholar Moshe Weinfeld would have to be ‘expelled’, ‘dispossessed’, ‘sent away’, ‘annihilated’, ‘thrust out’, ‘driven out’, ‘destroyed’, ‘exterminated’ and ‘cut off’ from the land (Weinfeld, 1993 p. 77). The language used here to describe the fate of the

Canaanites implies that the people would have been thrown into devastating poverty, when not actually killed.

It is possible that this exclusion was because the subject of the poverty – the Canaanites – are seen as the unrighteous enemies of Israel and therefore little concern is given to their well-being. Alternatively, it may have arisen due to the fact that the conquest of Canaan by Israel is made particularly difficult by inconsistencies in the biblical sources. Weinfeld (1993 p. 99), for instance, observes that some sources portray the subjugation and occupation of the land as taking place without the contribution of Joshua [Judges 1], and those in which Joshua does appear exhibit variances among themselves regarding the ways of his war and invasions.

Thus we are left again with the question of causality: who or what is responsible for the poverty experienced by the Canaanites? Again, the biblical sources prove inconclusive. The invasion into Canaan-held territory was, or was to be, lead by either God [Exodus 23:20], God's angel [Exodus 23:20-23], a hornet from God [Exodus 23:28], Joshua on behalf of the Israelites [Joshua 1:6] or the Israelites themselves [Numbers 33:50-53]. Conversely, the sin of the Canaanites themselves is also mentioned in several passages [Leviticus 20:22-24; Deuteronomy 9:4-5] as validating or causing their being uprooted. Because of such variables in the text – and the fact that the question of causality remains virtually unanswered in the literature – we are again left in the unenviable position of remaining inconclusive.

For both of these texts [Deuteronomy 28 and the Canaanites] we should remember that we have already seen a precedent between the concept of immoral behaviour and poverty. We saw on page 46 that the עֲנִי poverty referred to a type of poverty usually incurred by a dispossession following moral failure or disobedience. It is this word that has been used often to describe the Canaanite conquest, including God's action of driving the Canaanites out in Exodus 34:24, the Israelites action of possessing the land in Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 33:55 and Joshua 1:11, among others. If anything, this observation of the Hebrew usage would hint towards the cause of poverty in both of these situations being the people's rebellion, perhaps above God's judgement.

2.5 Questions raised

We see that our investigation has raised a number of questions regarding our interpretation. Here, we will address the three major questions that have arisen: is there a “voice of the poor” in the Bible? Have we considered authorial intent? Should we expect a biblical model to translate into contemporary times?

2.5.a Is there a “voice of the poor” in the Bible?

An important question to ask, particularly considering our coming synthesis of the World Bank survey and our interest in hearing from those actually experiencing poverty [refer to ‘The data set’ on p. 17], is whether there is an explicit “voice of the poor” expressed anywhere in the Old Testament texts. Unfortunately the wider literature is reasonably ambivalent on this topic, but the little that can be gained is helpful.

Gerstenberger, in his excursus on poverty for the *Theological dictionary of the Old Testament*, is quite upfront about his doubts that there is any voice of the “poor” in the Old Testament and therefore concludes that we should use the given textual sources ‘with caution’ (Gerstenberger, 2015 p. 248). These doubts are supported by Christopher Rollston, of George Washington University, who contends that the ‘Hebrew Bible was primarily a corpus written by elites to elites’ (Rollston, 2010 p. 133). He draws upon work by Ian M. Young, of the University of Sydney, who states that ‘contrary to modern western society where the question of the extent of literacy would look for who cannot read, it seems more prudent to approach an ancient society with the question reversed. We cannot assume that anyone except professional scribes was able to read and write unless the evidence points strongly to the literacy of another group’ (Young, 1998 pp. 244-245).

Young concludes that the writing of the Hebrew Bible was primarily restricted to the scribes, royal officials, kings, priests, prophets and possibly some skilled craftsmen – few of whom we should expect to have experienced considerable poverty during their lives. As we have seen, Pleins agrees, at least as far as the wisdom literature is concerned: ‘one of the implications of the royal background of wisdom writing in Israel is that this literature is a product of the ruling elite’: a sector of society that had little to do with the poorer peasants, petty tradesman and city artisans (Pleins, 2001 p. 457). This would seem to resonate with Heschel who, in his detailed exposition of the prophets, states that a crucial role of the prophets was actually to give a voice to the ‘plundered’

poor of Israel and Judah – a role that would perhaps be unnecessary if they could readily provide their own strong voice (Heschel, 2001 p. 6).

Nevertheless, Richard S. Hess of Denver Seminary is not convinced that we can be so sure. Citing the discovery of a tenth century BCE abecedary during the 2005 excavation of Tell Zeitah/Tel Zayit, Hess writes that there is now a 'growing body of epigraphic evidence that serves to emphasize the presence of numerous writers and readers of Hebrew' (Hess, 2006 p. 342) and that there is 'evidence that throughout Iron Age 2, and extending back to Iron Age 1 (c. 1200-1000 BCE), that every region and every level of society had its writers and readers.' While this does not equate to biblical writers actually coming from the lower levels of society, it certainly opens up the argument to possibility.

In response to our question, 'Is there a "voice of the poor" in the Bible?', we would need to err on the side of it being very unlikely and unusual. If we cannot confirm that any of the actual authors of the Bible were poor, then perhaps we must be content with what short, extracts we have that seem to reflect this voice: the passage of Exodus 16 and the narrative of Job [see footnote 27].

2.5.b Have we considered authorial intent?

It is important to make an acknowledgment of a tension noticed as this chapter progressed, and this regards our biblical interpretation. We are reasonably confident that drawing upon the legal, wisdom, prophetic or even narrative texts for moral or ethical guidance will be fruitful, for the authorial intent behind such passages was usually to communicate moral or ethical responsibility. However, we also recognize that, in the most stringent of terms, teachings intended to specifically communicate the causes of poverty were not usually the intent of the author [though perhaps some passages, such as the prophetic, writing seem to be more so]. We therefore acknowledge the hermeneutical limitations associated with using such a broad selection of genres in order to gather a portfolio of teachings on the aetiology of poverty.

It must be recognized though, that the intention for ethical or moral teaching does not automatically disqualify a text from also offering causal understandings. Jane Elliott,³² in her publication on the use of narrative in social research, indicates that there is almost an assumption that a reader will

³² Jane Elliott is the Professor in Sociology at UCL: Institute of Education.

read causality into a sequence of events presented in a text, irrespective of authorial intent (Elliott, 2005 p. 7). Elliot recognizes, however, that suggesting a causal link between two specific events is not the same as proposing a causal law, for we are only able to see how one event followed another under the specific set of circumstances featured in the text. It is then necessary for the reader to connect the text with their wider understanding of universal causal laws in order to make a more confident argument for causality.

With regards to our interpretation, it seems right to assume that we should be able to legitimately look for an indication of causal links in the texts – such as the famine in Egypt and Canaan, or the newly-free but famished Israelites of Exodus – but these links must be connected to our wider understanding. Therefore, it is prudent of us to consider these texts in the light of the wider understanding, as provided by the secular literature of Chapter 3 and the sample data of Chapter 4.

2.5.c Can we expect a biblical model to translate into contemporary times?

Of course, the question remains as to whether the teachings of the Bible are even applicable to readers outside of the biblical time and community. Should we expect to see a model for biblical times hold relevance for people with such vastly different culture [languages, family relations, communal interaction, values and motivations], politics [the development of democracies and institutional laws] and theological influences [Israel was formed as a theocracy under Yahweh which cannot, it is assumed, be argued for any nation today], all of which are evident between historical Israel and present-day civilization, including our Brazilian sample? This is a question that did not escape the attention of Wright (see Wright, 2004 pp. 399-412).

How then should we proceed? The issue of 'cultural distance' (as phrased by Hay, 1989 p. 13), whereby teaching and direction become vulnerable or obsolete because of the gap in culture or time, should not deter us entirely. We must remember that there was also a significant time and cultural gap between the worlds of early biblical Israel and that of the first century AD – the world of the New Testament. Yet the early church writers seemed to have worked with the principles of ethical authority and relevance that were inherent in the ancient texts, and this should likewise be encouraging to us in the current day.

We also propose it is very likely that there are universal principles that can be drawn from localized events. The death of Christ, Hay considers, was a concrete event in a specific historical and cultural context (Hay, 1989 p. 13). Yet it holds significance for every person in every generation as the means by which humanity can be reconciled to God. At its most basic, this is an example of universal significance being drawn from a localized event. We are therefore aware of cultural distance, but not discouraged by it. There is room for investigation.

Understanding shared commonalities

Hay also makes two suggestions that biblical models might extend beyond its own walls, based in a sense of shared commonalities between all of humanity. The first commonality concerns God's goodness towards believers and unbelievers alike: throughout the Old Testament, we find hints of a certain *common grace* for all of humanity. The Psalmist extols that 'the Lord is good to all, And His mercies are all over His works' [145:9] and that 'the eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time' [145:15]. This common grace is God's providence to all peoples, regardless of their position of righteousness before Him. It refers to His ordinary goodness, judicial restraint and continuation of natural cycles [such as the rotation of the earth, sowing and reaping] that exists for the benefit of humanity and is commonly available to all (Hay, 1989 p. 27). God's interest in humanity is seemingly transferable across cultural gaps.

However, there also seem to be hints of a *common standard* throughout the Old Testament; a standard that holds that God's truth, justice and righteousness are not reserved for His people alone, but are indeed universal. Abraham cried out '... shall not the Judge of *all the earth* deal justly?' [Genesis 18:25b, italics added], suggesting that any interpretation of Scripture that restricts God's judgement, rule and order to only a particular people group runs the risk of implying a restriction on the sovereign power of God.

There is another way to view this, however. According to Rabbi Shimon Dovid Cowen (2008), formerly the Senior Research Fellow in the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilization at Monash University, Australia the opening premise of the Noahide laws is that each member of humanity is made in the image of God (Cowen, 2008). The implications of this are momentous: if each human soul possesses and parallels [on a human scale] divine qualities, regardless of whether this is conscious in a person, then there are common, shared values which are oriented to an objective,

universal reference point. Thus, the 'imaging of the Divine translates into concrete values for human conduct, into *substantive* norms of conduct' (Cowen, 2008 pp. 50-51, italics in original). As the Noahide laws are the precursors to the more comprehensive and detailed code given specifically to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai, Novak sees them as a matter of 'universality, humanity and a universal rational language' (p. xix) making them universal in scope – in a manner that the Mosaic laws are not. Here, Novak enlarges the universal reference point, suggesting that Scripture's potency is derived from it finding its place as a response to the grander, shared human experience. Common humanity gives Scripture its reference, and the entirety of Scripture gives individual imperatives their reference.

We have here not only a central argument for the possibility of universal ethics, but almost the expectation of their existence. The Scriptures are more than just the unanticipated reception of God's inspired word, but rather His word given to respond to and illuminate much of the specific and common recognized needs or desires of humanity. We should certainly expect our search, therefore, to be well-equipped in recognizing and communicating universal models that are not limited to those who place their faith in the virtue of Scripture, but common to all of humanity and able to be applied across all faiths and none.

Recognizing inherent assumptions

In our aspiration for a series of ethical principles that can be applied outside the people of God, as well as to the contemporary Church community, we are immediately confronted with difficulty. However work by Oliver MT O'Donovan (1973), and subsequently Kaiser (1983), offer a helpful approach to applying Old Testament ethics in contemporary situations. In his writing, O'Donovan confirms that he is not asking the question whether biblical writing *deserves* to be read as an ethical mentor [he affirms, as we do, that it has ethical authority]. Rather he asks on what grounds it might be possible to extend an ethic beyond the pages of Scripture and make it applicable to other walks of life. To transfer biblical teachings to non-biblical audiences, O'Donovan explains that we must uphold three assumptions of the text[s] in question: that it is *prescriptive*, *universal* and *consistent*.

Prescriptivity

Irrespective of context, O'Donovan and Kaiser argue, the Scriptures make an assertion that they somehow have the inherent right to prescribe certain actions. More than just offering information,

the writers somewhat audaciously expect that behaviour should be changed in response to their words: 'the distinctive feature about prescriptions is not their authority but their pretence to it. They demand a decision for or against, and cannot merely be recorded as information' (O'Donovan, 1973 p. 21). Kaiser summarizes that the Bible claims the authority to direct behaviour, based upon the communication of a consistent message that is derived from a universal reference point. It is also possible to suggest that any scripture that does not present some fashion of normative guidance, or prescriptivity, has indeed ceased to be 'Scripture'. We affirm that an aspect of biblical authority in the application process stems from the text's expectation that it can and should influence thinking and behaviour.

Universality

The next assumption of O'Donovan is that it is possible for the Bible to contain certain ethical commands that are applicable to all of humanity regardless of culture, geography and time. From the onset, however, this is an assumption that is not to be made without addressing fierce interrogation. We recognize the cultural, political and technological differences both within the Old Testament text, and between the Old Testament text and our time. These differences, some debate, mean that there are few, if any, universal principles that can be applied today: is it that the ethical situations, societal patterns, social institutions and moral pressures from the text are so removed from our context that there exists a 'class of situations now without members' (Kaiser, 1983 p. 26). Indeed, Karl Bath³³ agreed, arguing that the Bible contains little, if any, 'universal' ethical commands, as he supposed that every command was given to a specific person, at a specific time and situation, and in reference to a specific action – all of which face insurmountable challenges when trying to directly relate to today. In short, this objection to universality is familiar: rules for a primitive society are simply not applicable for today.

O'Donovan and Kaiser both reject the totality of this objection, arguing that every specific command is derived firstly in reference to a universal principle: 'an ethic without universals would be no ethic, [but] a series of disconnected, arbitrary imperatives' (Kaiser, 1983 p. 25). Though we concede that every biblical command may be directed in the first instance to a particular person in a particular context, this does not refute its ability to be universalized. In fact, for the specific command to have

³³ See p. 17 of O'DONOVAN, O. M. T. 1973. The possibility of a biblical ethic. *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin*, 67, 15-23.

any justification, it must first be referenced to a higher, universal principle. Herein lies its authority, and it is the higher principle or reference that we seek.

Consistency

When applying Old Testament moral statements, O'Donovan argues, we are also making an assumption based upon the element of consistency. That is, that there is a recognized consistent approach across the Scriptures, and that this is reasonably free from contradiction or conflict. Kaiser argues that where the Scriptures have made claim to a specific injunction, and in another place made a common connection based upon a more general principle accounting for both, the likelihood is that there is a consistent principle being developed that will not be countered elsewhere. This assumption is particularly useful when the biblical directive seems to necessitate circumstances that are no longer valid or existent. O'Donovan's preferred example is that of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where he addresses the question of meat offered to idols [10:27-29]. Though the specific direction is unlikely to be relevant for a Christian today, O'Donovan argues that if it were possible to identify a consistent message across Paul's writing that would link this instruction to a greater principle, the contemporary Christian would now be in possession of a significant ethic that could now be applicable to his or her present situation. (O'Donovan, 1973 p. 19) All that is required for consistency to be valid is for the biblical author to have supplied more than just a list of 'bare, uninterpreted imperatives', but a thoughtful pattern of ethical thought that has culminated in the specific imperative or direction received (Kaiser, 1983 p. 26).

2.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to address our first research question: According to Wright, what is a biblical model of the aetiology of poverty? Are Wright's observations valid? What more can we learn by conducting a fuller biblical review?' In his writing, it is clear that Wright has endeavoured to present a workable model of poverty causation that can be appreciated by the lay reader. He identifies three sources of causality – natural causes, laziness and oppression – that he sees would interact in order to lead a person or group to experience a fall into poverty. In this, he is very effective.

Wright's view is that poverty from natural causes is simply the result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason. He sees poverty from laziness happens because laziness

and squandering can indeed lead to impoverishment, whereas hard work is often conducive to economic prosperity. Finally Wright understands that poverty from oppression arises due to the exploitation by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor. This can involve the exploitation of the socially or ethnically weak, or when ruling authorities or the judiciary use their discriminatory rule to favour unjustly or use their economic power to gain material advantage. In the light of his remarks about the interaction of the three causes – that rarely they work in isolation, and often trigger the onset of each other – we see it helpful to first present our understanding of his tri-causal model in the form of a three-way Venn diagram, as presented in Figure 2:

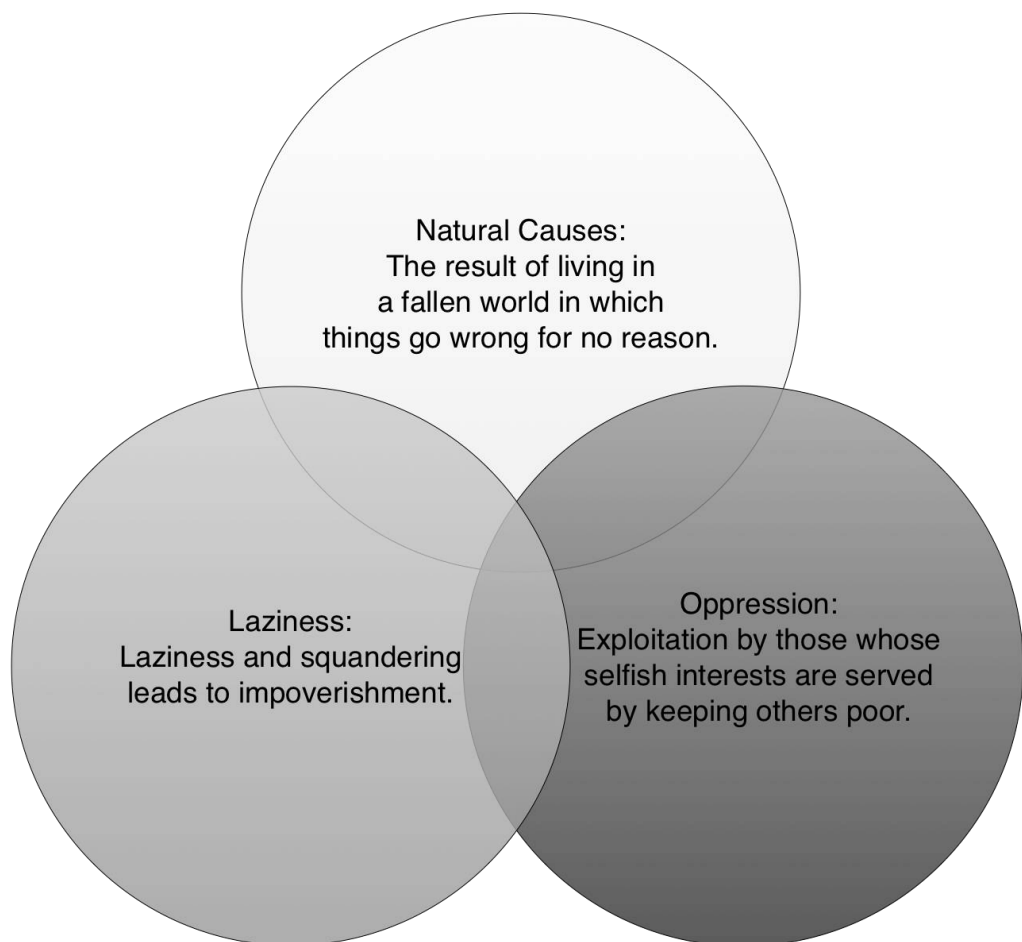


Figure 2: Understanding Wright's model of tri-causation

From our reading of his texts, we conclude that Wright's observations are, for the most part, valid. They are largely supported and sharpened by an understanding of the Hebrew semantics and by the work of others, such as Houston. We also contend, however, that he has missed critical texts that would seem to also contribute to the discussion. Exodus 16 speaks of twofold aetiology: poverty

may form in order to teach dependency on God, but also because of a lack of access to productive land. Exodus 22 hints that further harm could be caused when those in power lack compassion towards those under their influence. Leviticus 25 is also twofold: poverty can be caused by a lack of access to the resources needed to support oneself, but also from the social discord caused when the wealthy are permitted to accumulate possessions while the poor spiral into generational debt. Deuteronomy 28 and the Canaanite texts declare that poverty can arise from the hand of God Himself – but that it comes in response to human disobedience. Job provides a counter to the Proverbs assessment by declaring that poverty can arise through no fault of the individual and should not be considered an infallible indicator of one's righteousness or obedience. Job also maintained the unpredictability of fortune – the wicked *can* be wealthy and the righteous *can* be poor. We see that these additional observations are important for our discussion and will be recalled when the time comes to re-think Wright's model through the lens of the data presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3 SELECTED SECULAR MODELS

Having presented Wright's model for understanding the aetiology of poverty, replete with an expanded textual base, we now turn our attention to the second element of our synthesis: the secular literature. Four leading theories – the 'monetary approach', the 'capability approach', 'social exclusion' and finally 'participatory methods' – will be addressed using a framework offered by Caterina Laderchi [Oxford Department of International Development], Ruhi Saith [Oxford Policy Management] and Frances Stewart [also of the Oxford Department of International Development]. The framework is from their working paper, *Does it matter that we don't agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches* (Laderchi et al., 2003). In doing so, we will address our second research question: 'According to leading contemporary, secular scholarship, what is the aetiology of poverty?'

In the summary and critique of each approach, we will present an assessment and critique of the secular approaches based on the biblical materials that were deployed in Chapter 2. We will therefore effectively provide a theological critique of the secular concepts of the aetiology of poverty [and the wider idea of poverty where necessary] from the viewpoint of a biblical anthropology.

3.1 Opening Remarks

3.1.a Differentiating between 'poor' and 'non-poor'

To initiate our study, we will first offer a perspective of poverty through the voices of those undoubtedly most affected: the poor themselves. Deepa Narayan, on behalf of the World Bank, attempted to capture the view of poverty from those considered poor in twenty-three countries around the world. From her work, a number of viewpoints arose:

Take the death of this small boy this morning, for example. The boy died of measles. We all know he could have been cured at the hospital. But the parents had no money and so the boy died a slow and painful death, not of measles, but out of poverty.

— Ghana 1995a

You know good but you cannot do good. That is such a person knows what should be done but has not got the means.

— Ghana, 1995a

Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent on them, and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help.

— Latvia 1998

At last those above will hear us. Before now, no one ever asked us what we think.
— Poor men, Guatemala 1994a

(presented in Narayan et al., 2000 pp. 36, 32, 26, 14)

We can see from these personal descriptions that poverty is a complex, multidimensional state of being that remains seemingly reluctant to be easily defined. For instance, our first example from Ghana refers to poverty as not having the money to pay for the necessities of life; the speaker indicates that poverty consists of not having the finance to ensure life, health and well-being. The second comment from Ghana more reflects a state of hopelessness; the poor person knows what would be the 'good' thing to do in their lives, but [for a reason unexplored in this example] they lack the means or capacity to achieve their goal. The use of the phrase, 'dependent on them', in the Latvian example gives insight into a possible 'us and them' dichotomy – a sense that the poor are in some manner separated from the wealthy in a manner that is degrading or shameful. Our last reference from poor men in Guatemala indicates the willingness of a poor person to contribute to the poverty discourse. As primary stakeholders, the poor have the ability, the desire and the right to have their voice heard in discussions that may ultimately affect the course of their families and lives.

As Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 1) contend, while there seems to be worldwide agreement on the urgency of poverty reduction, there is substantial disagreement on a definition and measurement of poverty. We even use the term 'developing country' – usually pictured as a country embedded in the undertaking of reducing poverty amongst its citizens – with caution as there is little universal understanding of what this term means, and to whom it should be applied. The United Nations and the World Trade Organization have no established convention for assigning the term 'developing' and 'developed' for a country (United Nations, 2010, World Trade Organisation, 2010). The World Bank acknowledges the convenient use of the term 'developing' when referring to countries in the low- and middle- income brackets of its Gross National Income [GNI] per capita ranking (The World Bank, 2010).

This divergence is reflected in the four quotes presented above: is poverty caused by an absence of assets, a lack of capacity to do good, a mark of separation between social classes, or a subjective term that can only be defined by those experiencing it? On the basis of such questions, Laderchi,

Saith and Stewart have proposed four alternate, secular understandings of poverty and this chapter will explore these four approaches, giving reference to their historical background, theoretical underpinnings and practical implications.

3.1.b Questions for consideration

A number of important questions arise at the very outset, and for this we will use Laderchi, Saith et. al. (2003) as a key reference, but interacting with others as is helpful. Firstly, the authors raise the question of how to describe the 'space' of poverty and deprivation (p. 3). Poverty may span different 'spheres of concern' – such as the material, social, cultural and political aspects of life – and some of these may or may not be easily measured. Is poverty to be measured by resources or utility? Should we regard the potential for accumulation, or only its actualization? Considering resources, should the measurement be income or living standard (Lister, 2004 p. 39)? Martha Nussbaum enters this debate when she states that the real issue concerns a 'life that is worthy of the dignity of a human being' (Nussbaum, 2000 p. 5). Defining what is of value is of paramount importance, and differing responses to this question have led to the separation of the MA, CA and SE approaches.

Secondly, we must address the concern of 'universality' (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 3). Are we able to transfer definitions, values and measurements from one society into another? What modifications must we make regarding financial indices or with regards to the social norms experienced in each society? We will see that Peter Townsend [1928-2009], a British sociologist, attempted to address these societal questions by recognizing the difference between absolute and relative poverty within the MA. He presented his work in the influential piece, *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (Townsend, 1979 p. 31). Furthermore, whilst the MA and SE were initially devised in developed countries, the CA and PM were designed to regard developing countries (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 3). In what way are they applicable in one another's seemingly unique contexts? Lister carries this idea one step further, when she states that there is 'no single concept of poverty that stands outside history and culture' (2004 p. 3) and that each society – and groups within each society – construct the meaning of poverty as is practical to them.

A third question raised regards the issue of making reasonable and objective judgements (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 4, further detail given by Veit-Wilson 1987, as cited in Lister, 2004 p. 43). Is there an objective reality to poverty that can be captured, and if so, who has the right to decide this –

professional experts, the consensus of the populace, or the poor themselves? How much do the value-judgements and perspectives of the researchers influence their findings? What role do the subjective assessments of the poor play in shaping definitions? It was these concerns that influenced the rise of the PM approach.

Fourthly, we must ask if there is a justification for discriminating between the poor and the non-poor through the use of one or more poverty lines. If so, on what basis would this occur? Laderchi, Saith et al. raise this question, asking if there is validity in the assumption of some form of discontinuity between the two groups (2003 p. 4). Is this discontinuity confined to a specific part of an individual's life, or is it all encompassing? Should such lines be relative to the overall population, or are they based on essential survival for the individual?

The unit to be measured is also of interest to Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 5). At what level do we define poverty – individual, family or group? Whilst it is an individual that directly suffers from deprivation, separating their lives from the context of their households can be problematic. Resources and expenditure [not only income, but also housing, access to clean water, education and so forth] are typically shared between a household, particularly in households with children. Difficulties arise when attempting to establish individual measures of the uses of these resources, detached from the other persons connected to that individual.

The multidimensionality of poverty is also a concern raised by Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 5). If it is true that individual well-being [and thus deprivation] manifests itself in multiple dimensions, is it still possible to develop an aggregate index of measurement? The MA attempts to circumvent this issue by assuming that monetary measurement either captures the essence of deprivation, or acts as a proxy to all other deprivations. However, if aggregation is indeed important, then approaches that only present a clear single index may have limited potential.

The final question raised by Laderchi, Saith et al. concerns the 'time horizon' over which poverty can be defined (2003 p. 6). This question relates to the timeframe over which poverty should be measured: should it be months, years or longer? Depending on the approach used, many people may be regarded as moving in and out of poverty numerous times across the seasons and years. By their very nature, the CA and SE methods aim to identify long-term deprivation due to their

enduring consequences or their structural foundations. Conversely, the MA may indicate an attempt to measure deprivation in a shorter time frame, but not accurately reflect the long-term status poverty/wealth of a household. This indicates a need for diligence when applying a timeframe to any measurement of poverty levels (Lister, 2004 p. 39).

There may also be an additional question that might warrant attention. Lister (2004 p. 14) queries the right of any individual to actually be above the poverty line. Is there any basis, in justice or otherwise, that would indicate that individuals even have the *right* to be poverty-free? This philosophical question then circles us back to Nussbaum's comment in our first question: that the poverty discourse is indeed centred on our understanding of a life that is worthy of the dignity of a human being.

As can be seen, these primary questions strongly influence our understanding of poverty. The four secular approaches to be presented have developed largely as a result of differing responses to these questions. Each approach will now be discussed based upon its assumptions, measurements and implications. Let us first explore the concept that poverty relates to a lack of money or material possessions; that is, the MA.

3.2 The Monetary Approach

Take the death of this small boy this morning, for example. The boy died of measles. We all know he could have been cured at the hospital. But the parents had no money and so the boy died a slow and painful death, not of measles, but out of poverty.

- voice from Ghana, 1995a, cited in Narayan et al. (2000 p. 36)

At its most fundamental, the MA of recognizing and quantifying poverty is concerned with having enough financial resource and assets to ensure health and well-being. It is likely to be the most commonly used method of poverty assessment (Laderchi et al., 2003, Lister, 2004, Hagenaars and de Vos, 1988, Alcock, 2006, Holman, 1978). Though we will discuss various nuances in its definition, it primarily understands poverty as a 'shortfall in consumption [or income] from some poverty line' (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 6). Consumption and income measurements are used as proxies for welfare on the following basis: in the MA, financial measures are considered a satisfactory measure of utility, which in turn is considered an adequate reflection of welfare. The MA thus equates poverty with the failure to achieve a particular level of welfare, which is measured through income or expenditure data. Understanding that monetary indicators are a *proxy* for welfare

is important. Monetary resources are rarely considered as a guaranteed indicator of utility, but rather it is assumed that such resources can appropriately provide access to commodities that increase welfare, such as nutrition, secure housing and education (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 7).

The MA is ordinarily regarded as being separable into two distinct, yet not exclusive, schools of thought: 'absolute' poverty and 'relative' poverty. Their similarities and differences will now be discussed in sections 3.2.a and 3.2.b, below.

3.2.a 'Absolute' poverty

Background

The MA was largely pioneered by two individuals: Charles Booth [1840-1916], who studied poverty in London at the end of the nineteenth century; and Seebohm Rowntree [1871-1954], who studied poverty amongst residents of York in the late nineteenth and early-mid twentieth centuries (Laderchi et al., 2003, Alcock, 2006, Lister, 2004, see also Holman, 1978, Rowntree, 1902, Booth, 1903). Together, their work became familiar as the underpinning of 'absolute' poverty.

In the late 1880s, industrialist Booth launched a methodical investigation into poverty in London's East End, linking a detailed house-to-house investigation, police reports and statistics from the Poor Law in order to publish his seminal, seventeen-volume work, *Life and labour of the people in London*, between 1886-1903 (here cited from the third edition: Booth, 1903). The series presented notes and data that provided an important insight into the life of London's working class of the nineteenth century: their living and working conditions, the lives and employment of women, organization of trade and industry, the effects of national and international migration, leisure activities, and the religious life of the capital are all described in detail. Booth's first survey, published under the sub-title *Poverty*, was complex and original even by contemporary standards.

Disputing the levels of poverty found in a number of other London-based surveys at the time [specifically Hyndman's, which claimed that 25 per cent of Londoners lived in poverty], Booth embarked on what he planned to be an exact, quantifiable and scientific study to understand the lives of Londoners. He proposed a triple-analysis of their places of work and working conditions, their homes and the urban environments in which they lived and the religious life of the city.

Empirically, Booth attempted a colossal project. His investigators accompanied London School Board visitors, and policemen on their rounds. They questioned factory owners, employees and trade union delegates at their places of work or in their homes. They called on ministers of religion and their parishioners. They used notebooks to record the comments of interviewees, and investigators collected data to produce statistical evidence of the living and working conditions of Londoners. His initial survey of East London apparently included some 909,000 inhabitants (1903 p. 32) – a figure that Booth himself considered astonishing:

Of the wealth of my material I have no doubt. I am indeed embarrassed by its mass, and by my resolution to make use of no fact to which I cannot give a quantitative value... My object has been to attempt to show the numerical relation which poverty, misery and depravity bear... and to describe the general conditions under which each class lives (Booth, 1903 p. 7).

From his research, Booth chose to divide the surveyed into eight classes. Each are summarized below:

- a. The lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers and semi-criminals.
- b. Casual earnings - 'very poor'.
- c. Intermittent earnings.
- d. Small regular earnings [along with 'C' labelled the 'poor'].
- e. Regular standard earnings – above the line of poverty.
- f. Higher class labour.
- g. Lower middle class.
- h. Upper middle class.

(source: Booth, 1903 p. 33)

At the conclusion of his survey, Booth determined that 35 per cent of the East End's population were 'poor' [classes C and D], and of that, 12.5 per cent could be considered 'very poor' [B]. In distinguishing between these two terms, Booth noted:

The 'poor' are those whose means may be sufficient but are barely sufficient for decent independent life, the 'very poor' those whose means are insufficient for this according to the usual standards of this country. My 'poor' may be described as living under a struggle to obtain the necessities of life and make both ends meet, while the 'very poor' live in a state of chronic want (Booth, 1903 p. 33).

Booth's notion of 'sufficient means' was 18-21 shillings per week for a 'moderate family', given that they live prudent and self-disciplined lives and if they met no major personal disaster. This figure

was calculated on the basis of the average expenditure on food, rent and clothes from a sample of thirty families.

The influence of this piece of work was significant. By placing an explicit financial measurement on 'poor', Booth has been credited with laying the foundation of what was to become known as the 'poverty line'. Shadowing his work, a new era of inquiry in the field of poverty and development would open; an era that would see an increase in methodological, impersonal and large-scale scientific study of poverty. Data relating to the extent of poverty in England started to become increasingly available (according to Holman, 1978, Lister, 2004, Gazeley and Newell, 2007).

Following in Booth's footsteps, Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, a sociological researcher, reformer and industrialist from York, England, conducted what he considered the first scientific study of the extent of poverty in his northern city. His pivotal work, titled *Poverty: A study of town life* (Rowntree, 1902) included a study of over 46,000 'working-class' people living in York [two-thirds of the York population]. It also includes the first known usage of the phrase 'poverty line' – a minimum level of income deemed necessary for survival [though we had seen allusions to this idea in Booth's work]. Rowntree limited the scope of necessities to include three features: food, house rent and household sundries [clothing, light, fuel etc.] and purposefully disregarded any expenditure 'needful for the development of the mental, moral and social sides of the human nature' (Rowntree, 1902 p. 87). Using his parameters, he estimated the minimum necessary expenditure for one man or one woman to be 7s, a man and woman together to be 11s 8d, and a man, woman and child to be 14s 6d, per week (Rowntree, 1902 p. 87).

In a vein similar to Booth, Rowntree then reasoned that families living in poverty could be partitioned into two groups:

- i. Families whose total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency. Families in this group were described as living in 'primary poverty'.
- ii. Families whose total earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful. Families in this group were described as living in 'secondary poverty'.

From his research, Rowntree concluded that 15 per cent of the wage-earning class of York [10 per cent of the total population] were living in 'primary poverty' (1902 pp. 86-87) and 43 per cent of the wage-earning class [28 per cent of the total population] were living in 'secondary poverty' (1902 p. 111, all figures rounded). Rowntree's findings disturbed him. He recorded: 'That nearly 30 per cent of the population are found to be living in poverty is a fact of the gravest significance' (1902 p. 117).³⁴

Booth focused on the 'necessaries of life', whereas Rowntree highlighted 'physical efficiency' as his benchmark for poverty. His 1902 writings describe his interest in food inasmuch as it provided adequate nutrition for labour, housing to the degree that it provided adequate shelter from the elements and a place for bodily rest, and housing sundries so long as they also contributed to physical fitness. In this early piece, Rowntree acknowledged his dismissal of social enjoyment or the development of intellectual capacities. His interest lay in the minimum sum on which physical efficiency – bare subsistence – could be maintained, and assumes consistency across all countries and all stages in history. Even as late as the 1970s, the point of reference for absolute poverty continued to be seen as the individual's nutritional needs: Sir Keith Joseph [a British politician who served in the Cabinet under Harold Macmillan, Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher] maintained that 'a family is poor if it cannot afford to eat' (Joseph and Sumption, 1979 p. 27). Rowntree's poverty line soon became the basis for the idea of the 'absolute poverty line'.

The absolute monetary approach in contemporary practice

The practice of referring to an absolute poverty line – an objective minimum standard of economic resource below which one is labelled as 'poor' – is widespread. Following in the footsteps of Booth's '18-21 shillings per week per family' and Rowntree's '14s 6d per week per family of three', the United Nations has frequently referred to US \$1 per person per day as their standard to separate the poor from the non-poor (United Nations, 2012).³⁵ Using this as a reference, the number of

³⁴ Coinciding research by A.L. Bowley, completed in 1915, made changes to the inputs/outputs measured by Rowntree. He noted significant local differences – 4.5 per cent in Stanley and 19 per cent in Reading. Furthermore MacGregor, 1910, argued against comparing Booth and Rowntree's findings, as they were settled upon using different methodologies. MacGregor calculated that there was 3 per cent poverty in York using Booth's standard and 50 per cent poverty in London using Rowntree's standard. See DINI, A. & LIPPIT, V. 2009. Poverty, from orthodox to heterodox approaches: a methodological comparison survey. Riverside: University of California.

³⁵ US \$1 per day, as presented in the Millennium Development Goals of 2000, has been adjusted to US \$1.25 per day in 2012 in order to account for inflation. See UNITED NATIONS 2012. Millenium development goals report 2012. New York: United Nations.

people living in 'extreme poverty' [absolute poverty] was over 2 billion in 1990, falling to less than 1.4 billion in 2008. In developing regions, the proportion of people living on less than US \$1.25 a day fell from 47 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2008. To put it another way, the number of people living in conditions of extreme poverty dropped 110 million between 2005 and 2008. This can be seen in Figure 3:

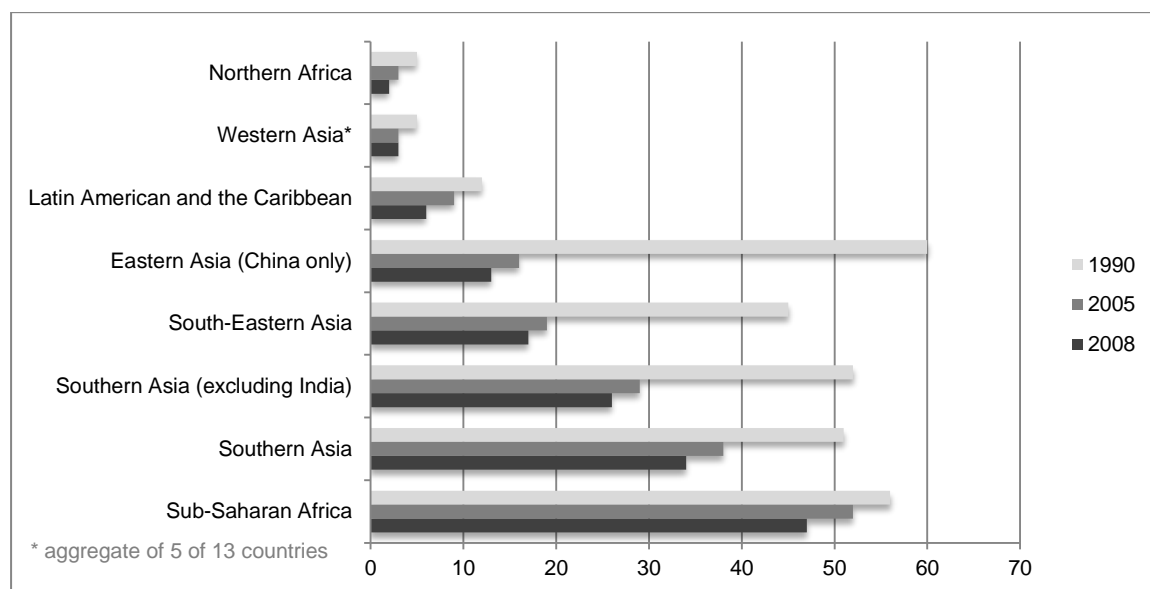


Figure 3: Percentage of people living on less than US \$1.25 per day

(Source: United Nations, 2012 p. 6)

The driving force behind this reduction in monetary poverty has been the economic rise of the Asian nations, noticeably China, which has managed to push down poverty from 60 per cent in 1990 to just 13 per cent in 2008. This is largely attributed to the colossal growth of its national economy in the same time period, which enjoyed annual growth rates of 11.3 per cent between 1990-2002. Other developing countries observed relatively smaller growth: India at 7.1 per cent; Pakistan, 5.7 per cent; Mexico, 4.3 per cent; Argentina, 4.0 per cent; Brazil, 4.0 per cent; and South Africa, 3.4 per cent. For comparison, the world's largest economy of the time, the United States, grew 4.7 per cent in the same period (Allen et al., 2005 p. 63).

The World Bank also favours, at its most foundational level, an absolute MA understanding when delineating between the 'poor' and the 'non-poor'. However, the World Bank allows freedom to countries to choose their methodology: the majority of developing nations in their survey [40] use the Cost of Basic Needs method, whilst two [Russia and Belarus] use the Food Energy Intake

method, the Dominican Republic and Haiti use the US \$1 a day-income method and the West Bank and Gaza use an 'Expenditure of 25-30 Percentile' method (World Bank, 2012). This indicates that poverty lines between countries may be different and comparisons therefore require more care.

An interesting trend has been observed since as early as the 1970s. When comparing poor and rich countries, Scitovsky noted that in general, developing countries use absolute poverty lines as their primary point of reference, whilst developed countries tend to observe relative poverty lines.

He commented:

...in the advanced countries, the poverty norm has long ago ceased to reflect a physiological minimum necessary for survival and has become instead a 'minimum social standard of decency,' the life-style that a particular society considers the minimum qualification for membership (Scitovsky, 1992 p. 116).

This is largely due to the applicability of the two approaches. Poverty measured against an absolute value [such as the US \$1 per day standard] falls steeply as GDP per capita rises, and is virtually inexistent in countries with an average income level above roughly US \$15,000 – which corresponds to the present situation of middle-income countries such as Malaysia and Chile, according to Niemietz (2011 p. 37).

Assumptions and limitations of the absolute monetary approach

In utilizing the concept of absolute poverty, a number of suppositions are made which should be discussed in the light of the questions raised by Laderchi et al. (2003), and presented in 'Questions for consideration'. Firstly, in giving an absolute monetary line necessary for subsistence, poverty's 'sphere of concern' is expressed as fundamentally material. Social, cultural or political development is of no interest. Having enough physical resource for subsistence is the key valid measurement that separates the poor from the non-poor. Yet it would be lax to presume that the goal of human existence is no more than the achievement of mere physical efficiency. Even Rowntree, in a later work, acknowledged this shortcoming by saying, '...working people are just as human as those with money. They cannot live on a 'fodder basis'. They crave for relaxation and recreation just as the rest of us do. But... they can only get these things by going short of something which is essential to physical fitness, and so they go short' (Rowntree, 1902 p. 28).

The absolute version of the MA also supposes that economic resource is an adequate, if not perfect, proxy for living standard. In this lies the presumption that households of similar incomes will enjoy similar living standards, and that households of different incomes will experience different standards. Yet in practice, this is not evident – and particularly at the lower income levels. In a review of four large-scale household surveys investigating child poverty in the UK, Brewer, O'Dea, Paull and Sibietta found unequivocally that children from households with the lowest incomes do not have the lowest average living standards. Rather they found that average living standards first fall as income rises, and then rise in a 'U-shaped' profile:

... roughly one per cent of children living in households with incomes below £50 a week have average living standards comparable to those with incomes of £250 to £500 a week. The lowest average living standards are to be found amongst children living in households with equivalized incomes of £100 to £200 a week, which represents about 11 per cent of all children, and corresponds to roughly 30 per cent to 50 per cent of median income (Brewer et al., 2009 p. 3).

A great variation in living standards was noticed for households with an income of less than GBP £300 per week, showing that low-income households have a greater chance of being either well above, or well below, the average living standards for their income.

The authors came to a number of interesting conclusions that could prove to be controversial in this debate. Firstly, they suggest that the usual measuring tools fail to capture accurately the income and standard of living of a household. Secondly, they maintain that 'disposable income' and 'living standards' are such fundamentally different concepts, that even when measured perfectly over a long period of time, they are likely to give different impressions of which households are the poorest. Thirdly, they maintain that 'snap-shot' measurements of income levels fail to take into consideration seasonal fluctuations, as individuals shift their resources to reflect their current and anticipated financial circumstances (Brewer et al., 2009 p. 1).

Continuing our critique of the theoretical underpinnings, we find further limitations. The absolute model implies universality, in that poverty exists across time and geography according to the same measures. Whilst it is true that adequate nutrition, shelter and clothing are usually accepted as universal necessities, assigning a universal price to these items is fraught with difficulties. As Holman points out from the Rowntree study, differing occupations amongst Yorkshire men may require vastly different calorie intake in order to achieve physical efficiency. The cost of housing

and food is also likely to be higher in colder parts of the country, even before influences such as labour, transport and the cost of available material are factored. To then assume that York is a typical representative of towns across England, Europe and the greater continents is also dubious, at best (Holman, 1978 p. 9). An equally challenging task is to construct such a 'basket of goods and services' that comprises the categorical needs of every human. Choices about what to eat and wear, how to bathe and warm oneself, and what type of dwelling to live in are all determined in some way by the society, and are thus by default, not absolute. This dilemma is referred to by Martin Ravallion, who in 2012 was the Acting Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank, as the 'referencing problem': what is the reference level of utility that forms the anchor of the poverty line? How do we define what level of utility can be achieved with particular economic resource? It can be seen, therefore, that the idea of a stringent, quantifiable and universal poverty line has considerable limitations (Ravallion 2010).

This notion of absoluteness also implies objectivity in the study of poverty. To the absolutist, there indeed exists an objective condition called 'poverty', and this can be measured and quantified. Furthermore, it would seem from much of the historical literature that the best person to conduct such measurement is an external, professional expert – such as Rowntree and his assistants (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 8). Holman advises that the element of professional bias in Rowntree's work [and, by default, the work of others] could have been partially improved if, at a minimum, he had 'started by examining how the majority of working-class people actually did spend their money instead of investigating how much they earned and then saying how it should have been spent' (Holman, 1978 p. 10). The absolutist's lack of inclusion of the perspective of poor people is often seen as a critical flaw in this approach.

Laderchi et al. (2003) also criticize the individualistic approach taken when using the absolute poverty approach. Though poverty at its most simplistic level affects the individual, measurement of income/consumption data in the MA is usually achieved via household. Social exchanges and collaborations are only considered important as far as they affect scaling household resource calculations, such as those concerning housing and sanitation. Thus there are concerns regarding the statistical validity of methodology that uses household data to measure individual welfare.

The theory of absolute poverty is rightly regarded as an innovative, pioneering approach to understanding the conditions of the poor. In many ways it has been responsible for laying the foundation for widespread, empirical research into poverty, yet a number of limitations have been noticed and addressed in small modifications to the theory. However, in order to tackle the major limitations, another approach has developed: the theory of 'relative' poverty. Relative poverty theory maintains the basic MA style of using financial indicators as a proxy for utility and welfare, but attempts to address the larger limitations: namely universality and the importance of social context. Relative poverty theory has gained considerable acclaim, and will now be discussed in the following section.

3.2.b 'Relative' poverty

Background

We have made note of two major weaknesses with the notion of absolute poverty: a) it insists on universality, and b) it operates in the sphere of the material but neglects the importance of social context. It is these observations that have led to the alternative conceptual leg of the MA: relative poverty. From this perspective, the poor are not those who fall below a fixed subsistence level, but those whose incomes are considered 'far too removed from the society in which they live' (Holman, 1978 p. 14). This approach compares a person's economic status with others in their community, rather than against an arbitrary subsistence level.

As a brief example to indicate the difference, a person in Britain could reasonably be expected to survive without owning a washing machine, but it could be argued that in the British community it is socially necessary to have this piece of technology. The person may not be considered poor according to the absolute poverty measure, but they would be deemed deprived in the relative poverty measure. Adam Smith [1723-1790], the influential Scottish social philosopher and political economist, suggested this as early as 1776³⁶, when he discussed the 'necessities' of life:

By necessities, I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is strictly speaking no a necessity of life... but in the present time... a creditable day labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt (Smith, 1976 pp. 869-870).

³⁶ Adam Smith is considered an early observer that poverty has a social aspect. As early as 1759, Smith was noting how poverty is more than hunger and starvation, and should be seen as being linked to shame, exclusion and social stratification. See p. 71 of SMITH, A. 2000a. *The theory of moral sentiments*, Amherst, N.Y., Prometheus Books.

Two centuries later Townsend became a key voice in the continuing formation of the relative poverty theory. His momentous work, *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (Townsend, 1979) rejects definitions of poverty which divorce needs from social context:

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities (Townsend, 1979 p. 31).

Townsend argued that societies, be they regional, national or international in nature, impose expectations upon their residents through their occupational, educational, and economic systems and customs. These expectations consequently create needs, and these needs must be accommodated through one's income and wealth. His much-referenced example is the commodity of tea: nutritionally worthless but considered a 'necessity of life' in some countries (Townsend, 1979 p. 31). In many countries, drinking tea is considered a way of life and subsequently important for psychological health. When friends or relatives visit, being offered a cup of tea [or its equivalent] is a communal expectation, which places this commodity as important firstly in the social realm, and secondly in the nutritional realm. As an individual's wealth affects their 'tea-ownership' ability, their power to interact within the normal sphere of society is also adversely affected. Townsend would then consider the tea-less individual in relative poverty, according to the norms of their society.

Rising living standards, fuelled by both technological innovation and the evolution of laws, were of considerable importance to Townsend. He notes that during the 1880s and 1890s each working class family could only expect to live in – and afford – a one-room house. Since then, however, guidelines such as the Parker Morris Standards [introduced in 1961] had raised the standards of what a family should expect in a dwelling. Raising the standards of new housing builds indirectly raised the financial obligations associated with occupying them, requiring more from low-income groups just to meet the expectations of living in such housing. In economic terms, Townsend was therefore concerned with defining a 'style of living' (1979 p. 50) that was accepted and approved in each society, and whether there was a point in the distribution of resources [income and assets] at which families living below would find societal participation particularly difficult. Such style of living

might include ownership of a colour television, refrigerator, washing machine or car, depending on the nature of the society.

The relative monetary approach in practice

Relative poverty as the standard by which developed countries measure improvement has indeed gained significant momentum. The European Commission adopted the relative position in 1984, when it stated that the poor:

‘...shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources [material, cultural and social] are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State in which they live’ (as cited in Lister, 2004 p. 21).

Eurostat, the statistical agency of the European Union, has adopted this relative approach, citing that any person with an income 60 per cent less than the national median of a member state shall be considered below the poverty line (Townsend and Kennedy, 2004 p. 13). The United Kingdom also favours it: the House of Commons uses the 60 per cent threshold to determine poverty levels (Townsend and Kennedy, 2004 p. 43). According to the findings of Jin et al. (2011), there were 13.5 million individuals [after housing costs are factored] living below the poverty line in the UK in 2009-2010 [most recent data]. This figure equates to 17.1 per cent of the population and had fallen on the previous year, largely amongst children and pensioners, who had benefited from tax reforms, but not amongst working-age adults without dependent children (Jin et al., 2011 p. 67).

Understanding how the MA is applied in different scenarios is important. Knowing that developing countries tend to use an absolute approach, whilst developed nations would favour a relative approach helps us to interpret their data: statistics showing that the UK’s declared poverty rate [17.1 per cent] almost matches that of the Yemen Republic [17.5 per cent] according to the World Bank (2005), should seem surprising given that the Yemen Republic had a Gross National Income per capita of only US \$1070 in 2011. Once we understand the differing methodologies used, however, the peculiarities become more logical. Understanding the varying interpretations of the MA, and how it is measured, must be kept in mind if we are to accurately compare and contrast the different scenarios presented in the literature.

Assumptions and limitations of the relative monetary approach

As with the absolute poverty model, relative poverty is also based on a number of assumptions that need to be commented on in the context of the questions proposed by Laderchi et al. (2003), and presented on p. 90. Firstly, according to the relativist, poverty still operates in the sphere of the material. Though interested in how the individual compares with other members of their society, it still determines that the poor/non-poor divide should be based upon income and expenditure and not upon utility, social engagement, political voice or any other form of measurement. Yet is income even an adequate proxy for these non-material assets? The Brewer et al. (2009) critique of the absolute version of the MA, as shown on p. 99, should also be applied to the relative version.

The relative approach does attempt to address the universality concerns raised by the absolute approach. By drawing a comparison with others in their community, the relativist concedes that 'different people need different things in different places according to different circumstances' (Alcock, 2006 p. 67). However, it is acknowledged that the commodities chosen as a measurement can be somewhat arbitrary, and have been criticized as being liable to the 'imposition of a subjective judgement of what is an acceptable minimum standard at any particular time' (Lister, 2004 p. 21). As with the absolute theory, it is the external 'professional experts' that determine the objective 'reality' of poverty, and this can often be determined by political interests (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 9) or policy requirements (Alcock, 2006 p. 69). Furthermore, Townsend and Kennedy (2004 p. 13) voice concern over defining a poverty threshold based on a proportion of mean or median income, as any such threshold is essentially arbitrary. They argue that there is no inherent reason why any particular proportion should be considered the threshold below which people can be said to be in poverty.

The changing baseline for deprivation measurement realized in the relative approach raises the question of relativity across *time*. We have noted that the [absolute] subsistence measurement assumes that the classification of poverty does not vary across time, as the same nutritional intake will always maintain physical efficiency. The relative measurement, by nature, accepts that poverty levels may change with time, regardless of whether the actual measurement deviates. This is because poverty is seen to exist if there is hardship compared to others in society (Holman, 1978). If the standards of others rise over time, the one who maintains a constant standard may soon find they fall below the ever-rising poverty line. This suggests that relative poverty is, at its core,

concerned more with societal inequality at the bottom half of the income distribution, than individual poverty per se.

An absolutist might, with some degree of lucidity, challenge this position. One generation that has experienced severe hardship [such as that in Britain during the 1930s] may claim that, on a historical level, poverty no longer exists in this country. Technological and societal changes have ensured that the baseline for poverty, in 1930s terms, is well beneath all but a very fraction of the contemporary British population (Lister, 2004). Alternately, they may claim that on a global level, poverty does not occur at all in developed countries. In the United States, families with a real income [per person] that is ten times that of those in the poorest developing countries can still be pronounced to be in poverty (Yeates, 2010). These disputes can prove difficult to reconcile.

A further implication of this has been attributed to our contemporary 'culture of acquisition'. As families attempt to attain not just the basic necessities for survival, but those manufactured by a socially acceptable brand and label, the financial burden can rise dramatically. It can be argued that as the living standards of the majority continually rise, we are at risk of manufacturing 'new forms of poverty... [without giving consideration to] what we are doing to those who cannot keep pace' (Lister, 2004 p. 22). As the basic cost of surviving in a socially acceptable manner rises further, so too do the ranks of those considered economically poor according to the idea of relative poverty.

The converse side of this peculiar implication is also apparent. Sen (1983) proposes the scenario where, in a very wealthy society, a segment of people who may not be wealthy enough to purchase a new car every year may still be considered in poverty. More forcefully, Sir Keith Joseph declared:

A person who enjoys a standard of living equal to that of a medieval baron cannot be described as poor for the sole reason that he has chanced to be born into a society where the great majority can live like medieval kings (Joseph and Sumption, 1979 p. 27).

Sen suggests that this hypothetical label of 'poor', based on the ownership of assets relative to others in the community, would be clearly 'absurd' (Sen, 1983 p. 159). This may also be true for the sectors of society who may forego specific commodities as a personal choice, rather than a result of poverty [such as the elderly, students, young families or certain religious groups].

A common limitation of both arms of the MA can occur in its measurement, as income/expenditure in many parts of society can fluctuate significantly throughout different time periods: farming incomes may fluctuate during agricultural seasons, and sellers of seasonal items [such as Christmas decorations] will experience less demand during the early months of the year. In these cases, data should be considered on an annual basis. Conversely, living standards do not always immediately reflect changes in income. In general, people tend to smooth their consumption by building up savings and assets in periods when their income is above the expected long-term average, and draw on them in periods when it is below (Niemi, 2011 p. 127). Lister (2004 p. 39) warns that expenditure after a decrease in income can continue to remain high [through running down savings, increasing debt, relying on charity or resorting to criminal activity], or expenditure after an increase in income may continue to remain low [as a household focuses on paying off debt or begins to save]. In a review of panel data studies on poverty, Carter and Barrett (2006) noted that a large share of overall poverty should in effect be known as 'transitory poverty', as people move in and out of poverty. Data that is collected in the form of household surveys must be conscious of the period in time that is measured.

The model of relative poverty should be respected for addressing many of the obvious limitations in the absolute. It makes a strong contribution to our view of universality and appropriately places poverty within a social context. Nevertheless, there are significant limitations that have become apparent and must be understood if we choose to use this as a primary source of measurement.

3.2.c The causes of poverty according to the monetary approach

As we have found, understanding and measuring poverty according to the MA can be problematic. Exploring the theoretical *causes* of monetary poverty is just as challenging, particularly given the significantly less attention given to it in the literature. Yet it is of immense importance. In a study of poverty in South Africa, it was noted that individuals rarely sought to address the causes of their poverty, but rather just sought to weather through times of deprivation:

Rather than acting collectively to address the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability, poor people in Ceres relied on informal networks – family, friends and employers – to tide them over when times were hard (Du Toit, 2004 pp. 998-999).

Understanding the root causes of poverty is likely to be highly beneficial to its prevention, and our response to its occurrence. In each section, therefore, we will discuss a number of prominent ideas

as to what causes an individual, family or nation to begin the original descent into poverty. Continuing the chronological approach taken earlier in this chapter, we will begin with [monetary] poverty causation as appears in the work of Booth and Rowntree.

Prior to Booth's surveys, poverty throughout Britain's communities was largely considered to be self-inflicted. Society's leading elites considered poverty to be not only a necessary motivator for work amongst the labouring classes, but more commonly it arose as a result of personal moral corruption. The poor were often looked upon as morally weak, and it was their own character faults – drunkenness, idleness, improvidence and fickleness – that thrust poverty upon them. Townsend (1979) comments that it was this moralism, combined with the fatalistic understanding of Jesus' teaching ['For the poor you have with you always...' Matthew 26:11], that undergirded much of nineteenth-century British social policy.

Whilst not dismissing moral failings, Booth's work sought out additional causes of poverty. In his 1887 address to the Royal Statistical Society (as presented in Booth, 1888), he shared his findings from the surveyed East London and Hackney areas. His surveyors have been tasked with analysing the causes of poverty [Booth insisted that nine surveyors were used, to counter potential surveyor bias towards the respondent], and concluded that out of 1610 heads of families that were in 'Great Poverty' [Classes A and B on p. 94]:

... 60 are admitted loafers – those who will not work. After these come 878 whose poverty is due to the casual or irregular character of their employment, combined more or less with low pay; then 231 whose poverty is the result of drink or obvious want of thrift, and finally 441 more, who have been impoverished by illness, or by the large number of those who have to be supported out of the earnings (Booth, 1888 p. 295)

Booth summarized these circumstances as 'Questions of Employment' [of which made up 55 per cent of respondents], 'Questions of Habit' [18 per cent], and 'Questions of Circumstance' [27 per cent]. Those he considered to be in the slightly less disadvantaged 'Poverty' [Classes 'C' and 'D' on p. 94] showed similar results – 68 per cent, 13 per cent and 19 per cent respectively (p. 295). Booth noted that his results only indicated the primary cause of poverty, and that there was every possibility that respondents suffered from multiple traits [specifically drinking, which was seen by many as the 'source of all evil' (Booth, 1888 p. 297)].

Likewise, Rowntree used his survey findings to enter the causation discussion. Whilst decidedly steering away from the ‘whole social question’ of the ultimate causes of poverty, he made reference to what he deemed to be the immediate causes of his ‘Primary Poverty’ [discussed on p. 95], as presented in Table 1 (adapted from Rowntree, 1902 pp. 119-120):

Table 1: Causes of ‘Primary Poverty’ in England, 1902

Lowness of wage, i.e. where the chief wage-earner is in regular work, but at wages which are insufficient to maintain a moderate family [i.e. not more than four children] in a state of physical efficiency	52%
Largeness of family, i.e. cases in which the family is in poverty because there are more than four children, though it would not have been in poverty had the number of children not exceeded four	22%
Death of chief wage-earner	16%
Incapacity of chief wage-earner through accident, illness, or old age	5%
Chronic irregularity of work, sometimes due to incapacity or unwillingness of worker to undertake regular employment	3%
Chief wage-earner out of work	2%

Rowntree’s conclusions were somewhat controversial, given the prevailing moral climate. By suggesting that an individual – resourcefully employed in regular work and not obviously wasteful of their income – could remain in poverty because of insufficient wage, he contradicted the belief that any and every thrifty and hard-working individual could responsibly provide for his family. It was those that he considered to be in ‘secondary poverty’ [discussed on p. 95], that reflected the more common notion of the undeserving poor: those that wasted their resources on non-essential items or indulgences.

Initially, Rowntree concluded that this exemplified that poverty had both moral and economic causes. Low wages and underemployment merged with the three ‘great moral causes’ [intemperance, drink and gambling] to create an environment of poverty. Yet he was reluctant to assign a first cause: when speaking at Stoke-on-Trent in 1904, Rowntree opted not to resolve ‘whether drink was the cause of poverty or whether poverty was the cause of drink’ instead suggesting that the solution to both problems was likely to be rooted together (as cited in Freeman, 2011 p. 1182). This understanding of a balance between moral and economic causes is reflected in later American literature, albeit having evolved somewhat into the newer title of ‘individual’ and ‘structural’ causes. This will be explored more fully in section 3.4: ‘Social Exclusion’.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to monetary poverty on a national level. Looking at economic successes and failures of entire countries, economist Jeffrey Sachs (2006 pp. 56-64) proposes that nations [and their residents] are held back from achieving financial prosperity for a number of explicit and measurable reasons. He labels these circumstances as 'Poverty Traps':

- Extreme poverty
- Physical Geography
- Fiscal Trap
- Government Failures
- Cultural Barriers
- Geopolitics
- Lack of Innovation
- Unfavourable Demographics

Foundationally, he argues, the poor remain poor because of their inability to create a margin of income above sustenance that will support savings and investment. With all resources committed to the act of staying alive, they have little means of accumulating the capital that is necessary to allocate time and resource to developing oneself. At its most fundamental, Sachs argues that people are poor, because they are poor.

Before allowing this thought to be dismissed as circular reasoning, however, Sachs supports his argument by providing seven additional 'traps' that can contribute, often in a cascading manner, to the primary trap of poverty. Whilst some countries are naturally endowed with rich natural resources, favourable soil conditions, ample rainfall, navigable rivers and coastal ports, these are often lacking from countries caught in the *physical geography* trap. Landlocked countries are unable to trade efficiently to markets across seas, mountainous terrain inhibits the opening of railway networks and tropical countries provide ideal environments for the spread of diseases such as malaria. Though not insurmountable, these features, and many others, may typically delay trade, weaken productivity and impair the human resource of a nation.

The third and fourth observations, the *fiscal trap* and *government failures*, refer to a government's willingness and ability to support growth. They must be willing to create an environment that

nurtures private enterprise, provide a judicial system that enforces the rule of law regarding property and contracts, and minimize corruption to ensure that legitimate businesses and ethical citizens are rewarded for their productive endeavours. However, such a government must also have the ability to act in such a fashion: they must be free from overwhelming internal or external conflict, free from overpowering debt repayments and have sufficient tax revenue to invest in public infrastructure and the human resource required to maintain sustainability. Governments that cannot break such traps are vulnerable to becoming 'failed states', characterized by war, revolution, coups and anarchy.

Sach's fifth 'trap' refers to *cultural barriers*. Religious or societal norms can be an obstacle to development when they limit the rights, opportunities or securities of targeted groups. Most frequently, this occurs where women are denied the opportunity for education or sexual equality. A lack of education may reduce a woman's options in the labour force, place her vulnerable to the death or estrangement of a male provider, and increase her risk of oppression. Similarly religious or ethnic minorities may be at risk of exclusion from public services or educational establishments, or face other forms of discrimination. In extreme examples, minorities can face legitimized oppression, violence or even ethnic cleansing.

Countries affected by adverse *geopolitics* can have their opportunities for commerce blocked by international trade barriers. Whilst these embargos are normally designed to restrict the activities of regimes deemed unscrupulous, Sachs argues that such controls usually harm civilians more than governing regimes (2006 p. 61).

The difficulty of an *innovation deficit* is seen as both a cause and result of poverty. In order to engage in the type of research and development that will lead to more productive and secure lives, individuals require capital to invest, a large consumer marketplace, protected property, contractual entitlements and intellectual rights. Without these, individuals can become reluctant to innovate and the adoption and adaptation of new technologies stagnates. Innovation increases markets, and markets increase innovation: this mutually reinforcing process is absent in many developing nations.

Finally, Sachs cites a *demographic trap* as the last significant cause of recurring poverty. In richer countries, fertility rates have dropped with time as mothers become more educated and increasingly able to take advantage of their employment and social opportunities. This trend has continued in

developed countries until the fertility rate has reached roughly the rate of replacement (2006 p. 66). However, parents in poorer communities often have larger families, and often for plausible reasons: large families circumvent high child mortality rates, provide the potential for labour, and facilitate a degree of security in old age. Demographics become a trap, however, as parents of large families struggle to feed, medicate and educate each child, thus reducing the likelihood of future financial prosperity. Poorer future generations continue to have large families, which in turn produce poor offspring, and the cycle becomes a trap.

In this, Sachs has endeavoured to provide a coherent understanding of recurring poverty from a national level. His conviction that poverty can be solved once and forever by a final, 'Big Push' injection of financial resource affirms this view that poverty is concerned with the monetary sphere, and thus can be solved by monetary mechanisms. His detractors³⁷, however, find fault with his 'external expert' approach, his preference for top-down policy development over shared-responsibility and his depiction of poverty as merely a 'technical problem' that can be solved with technical solutions [and fails to take into account social dynamics]. Nevertheless, the idea that certain individuals or groups can get to the point of a poverty 'trap', wherein they are incapable – regardless of resourceful effort or moral temperance – of escape, is important.³⁸ It reinforces Rowntree's earlier rebuttal that effort alone may not always bring prosperity. Azariadis and Stachurski (2005) weigh into the discussion by noting that the mechanisms that lead to a poverty trap may occur at any scale: from individuals to families, communities, regions and countries. Traps are liable to span political boundaries, and can arise within collections of individuals affiliated by ethnicity, religious beliefs or clan. Whether or not Sachs' framework is itself tenable (Easterly suggests it is not, in Easterly, 2006a), the model has worthy connotations that will be linked to section 3.4.

It is apparent that the cause[s] of monetary poverty is both individual and economic. Whilst individuals have a responsibility for resourcefulness in employment and thriftiness in expenditure,

³⁷ In particular William Easterly. See EASTERLY, W. 2006b. *The white man's burden: why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good*, Penguin Group USA. Also EASTERLY, W. 2006a. The Big Push Déjà Vu: A Review of Jeffrey Sachs's "The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time". *Journal of Economic Literature*, 44, 96-105.

³⁸ Two alternate approaches to this concept are developed in: AZARIADIS, C. & STACHURSKI, J. 2005. Poverty traps. *Handbook of Economic Growth*, 1, 295-384. Also, CARTER, M. R. & BARRETT, C. B. 2006. The economics of poverty traps and persistent poverty: an asset-based approach. *Journal of Development Studies*, 42, 178-199.

there are a number of externalities that can help or hinder their achievement. These thoughts will be continually developed in the following sections.

3.2.d Summary and critique

The influence of the MA on our understanding of poverty cannot be overstated. It is likely to be the most recognizable approach, and has influenced the policies of organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. By using income as a proxy for welfare, it seemingly offers a quantifiable measurement – an objective poverty line that presents the opportunity for interpersonal and international comparison – though we have seen the limitations of this in practice. The absolute model is concerned with the basic essentials for human survival, whilst the relative model could be more linked to inequality within a society. When viewed through a biblical lens, we can see multiple areas of both agreement and disagreement with the MA.

Both Rowntree and Booth accepted that a degree of moral corruption could lead to poverty, and this is supported in the biblical texts – most noticeably in Proverbs. As we have seen, ‘He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues vain things lacks sense’ [Proverbs 12:11], and ‘For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe *one* with rags’ [Proverbs 23:21]. However, we have already discussed the problems associated with using these texts from Proverbs in section 2.3.b and further examination is not warranted here.

Rowntree was provocative when he submitted that an individual with a honourable view of work could become poor because of an inability to generate sufficient income for his or her circumstances. This is also reflected in the biblical texts. We know that the early allocation of land to the tribes of Israel did not originate in equality or desert, but rather in need: each family must begin with enough resource to meet the needs of their family. Those that lost the opportunity to meet their needs were to be accommodated through instructions to allow gleaning [Deuteronomy 24], redemption of property [Leviticus 25] or the return of land to its original owners every fifty years [Leviticus 25]. It is evident that poverty can be caused by insufficient access to the means crucial to preserve self-sufficiency.

In his list of poverty ‘traps’, Sachs outlines his view of eight causes of poverty. Though many of them might be more suited to modern times, there are at least a few that connect with the biblical

sources. His 'physical geography trap' resonates to the conditions facing the Israelites as they left Egypt and traversed infertile and harsh land [Exodus 16]. His 'government failures' – where the leaders fail to protect private enterprise, provide a fair judicial system or minimize corruption – connects with a number of biblical records: the failures and abuses many of Israel's kings, of which Deuteronomy 17:14-20 forewarns; Jehoiakim as king [Jeremiah 22]; and Amos's denouncement of Israel's elite, to name but a few. However, it must be said that Sachs shies away from being critical of governments in any real sense of the word: failure of governance is seen to be largely caused by ill-fortune, rather than deliberation. The biblical authors are far less sympathetic towards unscrupulous leaders. Lastly, Sachs observes that 'cultural barriers' can cause discrimination on the basis of sex, religion or ethnicity. Though he shows passing concern with the well-being of the discriminated individual, his primary concern with this bias seems to be its effect on overall development: discriminating against sections of society removes them from potentially contributing to the economic growth of the group. The Bible likewise recognizes that poverty can arise from exploitation based on social, economic or ethnic factors. The motivation behind abstaining from such activity is not economic but empathetic: the Israelites were to remember their time of exploitation in Egypt and to deal with weaker people groups with compassion [Exodus 21:22], remembering God's concern for their welfare [Exodus 22:25-27].

However, there are a number of areas of the MA that must be rejected when viewed through the biblical lens. It is the MA's sphere of concern – that poverty is only concerned with financial properties – that we see as the fundamental flaw. Measurements of income or consumption should not be viewed as an accurate proxy for well-being, for surely at the heart of a biblical anthropology is the belief that all of humanity stands equal before God [Genesis 1:27] and that each individual has a God-given worth and value that is separate to tangible assets. Whenever people are understood as commodities, and where money is understood as determining human identity and human worth, there are serious implications and consequences for our common Christian understanding of theological anthropology. Therefore, any theory or activity that fails to recognize, or is detrimental towards, this inherent human worth should be rejected. Judging people according to their wealth, not equitably on the basis of their inherent dignity, is strictly forbidden [Leviticus 19:15]. The Bible is also clear that a person's welfare is subject to greater influences than can be measured from income and expenditure surveys: Job's experience with poverty encompassed familial, relational, bodily, emotional and spiritual dimensions, in addition to his fiscal losses.

Likewise, God is interested in a needy person's physical comfort more than their valuable possessions [He responds to their distressed cry, not their loss of wealth, in Exodus 22:27].

The MA's use of households, groups or nations as the primary unit of measurement must also be treated with skepticism. From an academic perspective, averaging economic resource across groups fails to take into consideration not only the obvious inequalities, but also makes no distinction in a person's ability to utilize that resource. Both societal discrimination and market availability significantly influence an individual's ability to convert their commodity into a worthwhile resource – a family might be considered rich, but the patriarch might be the only person benefitting from the wealth. Therefore, to suggest that a group is “rich” or “poor” based upon average or total output neglects the inevitable within-group differences, particularly in large units such as countries. Beyond this, we are also critical of the MA's use of the group unit of measurement, based on a biblical perspective. The individual themselves matter, not just the individual as part of the group. A variety of scriptures testify to God's knowledge and concern for the individual [i.e. Psalm 139:13; Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5]. The narratives of Job, Elimelech and Jacob's family show a specific concern for the welfare of the individuals.

Nevertheless, the Bible also affirms that humans exist in a community. An individual's innate relationship with others has two major implications for how we understand well-being. The first implication concerns how we understand universal measurements. In the absolute form of MA, the baseline standard of poverty does not change as the community around the individual changes because of time, technology or geography. Thus it fails to take into consideration the various pressures that the group environment places on the individual's purchasing power. Conversely in the relative form of MA, the heavy focus on social pressures, social participation and inequalities makes no allowance for commenting on the state of the group as a whole: if all are rich, then none are rich; if all are poor, then none are poor. Secondly, the Bible intimates that individuals naturally have dependencies on others and, conversely, obligations towards others [Genesis 4:8-10]. Both forms of MA neglect or trivialize the effect of these communal dependencies, and we propose that any understanding of poverty aetiologies must adequately reflect the nature of humans living in community.

This biblical concept – the individual is interweaved with the community – addresses Laderchi's question of universality in a way that remains problematic in the MA. As all individuals are created from the same basis [Genesis 1:27], there should be elements of commonalities amongst all people, regardless of time and space. What causes poverty in one person should also be a potential risk in another. Yet as communities develop and change in response to circumstances, the person's ability to safeguard their welfare so to changes, as they are intertwined with their local community. This leaves us with only one realistic solution: the aetiology[ies] of poverty must be both universally valid and locally contextualized.

The MA also typically uses a snapshot survey approach to identify the poor. However, such an approach fails to recognize seasonal changes and dynamic processes involved in becoming wealthy and becoming poor. It also encourages a fatalistic approach to poverty: there are "the poor" and "the rich", and the likelihood of migrating between groups is small. A preferred biblical understanding of poverty is that of a transitory state of being or, in the words of Jacobs, 'an intrinsically impermanent condition' (2010 p. 52). We remember that Leviticus 25 uses the term מֵיֶזֶד five times, with each one a reference to a fellow Israelite, brother or countryman 'becoming poor'. Is there a subtle, but deliberate, reminder that the poor are not *someone else*, but *one just like you*, who once may have been enjoying prosperity, but for some reason is now sliding into poverty – and they require your assistance to halt their fall. The weakness in the MA's snapshot approach is obvious: it fails to explain *why* the descent is happening, and it fails to appreciate *how long* this state will persist. Therefore, we reject any understanding that refrains from placing measurements within the process of time. An individual's history of personal welfare [and hope for future welfare] are surely significant factors in well-being and must be given due recognition.

Needless to say, the MA makes no reference to God, or rebellion against God, as a cause of poverty. The approach is a purely secular vehicle for understanding poverty and cannot be expected to include spiritual dimensions. It is reasonably surprising, however, to see that references to some form of natural causes are also all but absent from the writings of Booth, Rowntree, Townsend and Sachs.

Because of the resistance that has risen against the MA, alternate measures of poverty have been sought in order to more accurately express the human condition. One such approach is known as

the 'capability approach', and it leans more towards what humans are able to achieve. We will now turn our attention to this in the following section.

3.3 The Capability Approach

You know good but you cannot do good. That is such a person knows what should be done but has not got the means.

— a voice from Ghana, 1995a as cited in Narayan et al. (2000 p. 32)

Realizing the limitations of the MA, more recent endeavours to define poverty have focused more on an individual's well-being – often referred to as 'capabilities'. To paraphrase our Ghanaian friend, in this approach poverty might be understood as the inability to 'do good'. Whilst absolute and relative poverty explanations are concerned with income and consumptive faculties, this approach focuses on the development of human capabilities, not the growth of utility – or its proxy, financial income (Sen, 1999, Laderchi et al., 2003).

3.3.a Background

The CA has been influenced by a rich heritage of prominent thinkers; aspects of its subject matter can be linked to the thoughts of Aristotle [384 BC-322 BC], Adam Smith [1723-1790] and Karl Marx [1818-1883]. In its present form, Amartya Sen and to a lesser extent, Martha Nussbaum, have been the predominant voices (see Nussbaum, 2003, Sen, 1999, also Robeyns, 2005), and we will see that their understandings do diverge to a degree. From the perspective of Sen [an Indian economist based largely in the developed 'North'³⁹] the CA is based on understanding poverty as the 'deprivation of basic capabilities rather than lowness of incomes, which is the [current] standard criterion of identification of poverty' (Sen, 1999 p. 87). In this approach, income and consumption matter only insofar as they facilitate 'what really matters': that is, the kind of life that an individual is able to live and the options and prospects available for them to lead that life (Lister, 2004 p. 15). Robeyns understands the CA as 'clearly a theory within the liberal school of thought in political philosophy' in its value of individual freedom and subsequent evaluation of policies based upon their impact of people's freedoms (Robeyns, 2005 p. 95).

³⁹ Amartya Sen was educated at Calcutta University and the University of Cambridge and has held professorships at Jadavpur University of Calcutta, the Delhi School of Economics, the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford. He was the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge until 2004 and is currently the Thomas W. Lamont University Professor, and Professor of Economics and Philosophy, at Harvard University.

In Sen's rendition,⁴⁰ the CA maintains that the notion of an acceptable standard of living should be understood in terms of people's capability to function; that is, their effective opportunities to engage in, and be, who they want to be. To conceptualize this, Sen offers the following useful sequence:

Commodity → Characteristics → Capability [to function] → Utility⁴¹

(source: Sen, 1983 p. 160)

In this, Sen views goods and services [including wealth] as commodities, that are 'merely useful for the sake of something else' (Sen, 1990 p. 44). Commodities are then converted into characteristics, which are the enablement of the commodity. This enablement provides the individual with certain capabilities, which are a person's ability to achieve a 'doing' or 'being' that is valuable to them [a person may choose not to exercise that capability, but it is present, nevertheless]. When a person exercises the capability, they achieve a specific function [e.g. being adequately nourished], and the achievement of this function brings the individual a measure of utility. His preferred illustration (Sen, 1983 p. 160) is that of a bicycle [commodity] which enables transport [characteristic]. This transport provides a specific capability [enhanced movement] that often returns utility [happiness].

Sen argues that the key link in this flow, with regards to poverty and development, is capability (Sen, 1983 p. 160). He supports this conclusion by reasoning that the commodity ownership itself is not the right focus, as it does not adequately tell what the person is able to do. A person with a disability or living in a mountainous environment, for example, might not find a bicycle particularly useful. Likewise the bicycle's characteristic [transport] is irrelevant if it does not actually provide the intended movement. Utility, Sen also claims, is by nature too subjective. With its basis in the emotional response of the user of the bike, utility can fluctuate between those with a naturally cheerful disposition and a 'grumbling rich man' (p. 160). In a later piece, Sen adds a further critical comment on the common perception of utility: 'Happiness or desire fulfilment represents only one aspect of human existence' (Sen, 1984 p. 512). Though important, utility should stand amongst rights, positive freedoms and virtues as intrinsically valuable outcomes. Through this process, Sen deduces that it is neither the commodity nor its characteristics, nor the resulting happiness, which

⁴⁰ Sen readily admits the strong influence of Adam Smith in his approach to poverty and economics. See p.xvi and p. 24 of SEN, A. K. 1999. *Development as freedom*, Oxford University Press.

⁴¹ Clark has offered a slight repositioning of this flow: Commodity – Capability [to function] – Function[ing] – Utility. In this way, he removes a commodity's characteristic in favour of the actual functioning achieved when the commodity is put to use. See CLARK, D. A. 2005. *The Capability Approach: Its Development, Critiques and Recent Advances*.

is an adequate indicator of one's standard of living; it is one's capability to do the various things that they choose to do. Poverty is therefore an absence of capabilities.

The CA as progressed by Sen has developed largely as a critique to the limitations found in the MA's emphasis on utility and income/resources (Sen, 1999, also Laderchi et al., 2003). Perhaps more accurately, however, the CA's most vehement criticism of the MA lies in particular with the expression of relative poverty that has had widespread emphasis in the academic literature in the post World War II years, particularly from Townsend (Sen, 1983 p. 155). Whilst Sen concedes the merit of the relative perspective – holding it as 'welcome change... [which is] valuable in the recent discussions on poverty' (pp. 153-154) – he fundamentally rejects the idea that deprivation is, simply put, 'being able to achieve less than what others in that society do' (p. 155). Poverty must not be understood as 'just a matter of being relatively *poorer than others* in the society' (Sen, 1985 p. 669 *italics in original*). A person that is not able to satisfy his/her most basic needs, such as nutrition, must always be considered poor regardless of the status of their surrounding community. Even if poor compatriots surround this person, they must be considered poor if they fail to achieve a certain absolute standard of minimal capabilities. Poverty cannot be relative to the community.

From the outset, Sen holds three claims in favour of the CA:

- i. CA focuses on deprivations that are *intrinsically* important, whilst the MA focuses on income, which is only *instrumentally* important.
- ii. There are other influences on deprivation besides low income, which is only one means of generating capabilities.
- iii. The instrumental relation between low income and low capabilities is *variable* between different communities, within communities, and even between individuals.

(source: adapted from Sen, 1999 pp. 87-88, *italics in original*)

In developing these points, we see that the supporter of capability is skeptical about the validity of using income/expenditure as an accurate proxy of utility. The role of money in achieving utility is largely dependent upon the extent to which goods and services can be commoditized: how well a person can convert money into the things that are important to them. As this ability varies amongst societies, the persuasiveness of money as an accurate proxy for utility is, at best, 'rough' (Robeyns,

2005 p. 97). To qualify this point, however, Sen does acknowledge the 'sensible view that low income is clearly one of the major causes of poverty, since a lack of income can be a principle reason for a person's capability deprivation' (Sen, 1999 p. 87).

The CA thus focuses more on what is deemed to be 'intrinsically' beneficial. Difficulties arrive, however, as Sen has thus far seemed hesitant to prescribe a list of capabilities that should form the basis of this approach, and for this he has received both criticism and praise (Robeyns, 2000 p. 14, Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 17). Nevertheless, one can find within his major work, *Development as freedom* (Sen, 1999), that he has presented what he considers to be five 'instrumental freedoms' in fostering well-being:

- i. Political freedom
- ii. Economic facilities
- iii. Social opportunities
- iv. Transparency guarantees
- v. Protective securities

(source: Sen, 1999 p. 38)

Together, Sen contends that these five instrumental freedoms give people the opportunity to: establish who should govern them and on what basis; enjoy exploiting their personal economic resource for the purpose of production, consumption or exchange; make use of social facilities such as education and health care; expect just disclosure and rationality when dealing with one another, and; to benefit from an institutional social safety net, protecting them from abject misery when faced with adverse material changes in their lives (Sen, 1999 pp. 38-40). It is important to recall that Sen presents these as *freedoms*, not specifically *capabilities*. To clarify, he notes *freedoms* and *opportunities* merge in order to provide a *capability*. That is, a person has a capability when they have the opportunity to function in a particular way and the freedom to choose whether they exercise the opportunity or not. He cites the example of Mahatma Gandhi [1869-1948] memorably fasting during India's struggle for independence from the Raj (Sen, 2005 p. 155). Whilst Gandhi had the opportunity to be well fed, he also had the freedom to deny food. In terms of functioning, Gandhi did not differ from a starving famine victim, yet he maintained the full capability of being adequately fed.

The production of such a fixed list – stemming from theory rather than public discourse – still remains concerning for Sen for a number of reasons (Sen, 2005 p. 158). He maintains that capabilities cannot be removed from context: they must be understood in terms of what one is trying to achieve, such as utility, rights or virtues. Furthermore he suggests that the social conditions of a country or community might dictate priorities. A developing country might choose to focus on primary education and health care as fundamental capabilities for its citizens, whilst a developed country might prioritize internet access and digital communication. He also insists that public discussion and reasoning is vital to understanding the needs of a local community, which will in turn help identify, shape and place relevant value upon each particular capability. It is clear that Sen wishes for the CA to remain seemingly ambiguous in identifying specific deprivations. Nevertheless, it still upholds the ideal that intrinsically important capabilities are a significantly more appropriate measurement of poverty than income and expenditure.

Returning to our three claims presented earlier, Sen also holds that there are a number of different influences on capability deprivations besides income. Yet, in a similar vein to his first point, he does not specifically list such influences. From his writing, however, we are able to presume that education and healthcare would be part of this catalogue:

It is not only the case that, say, better basic education and health care improve the quality of life directly; they also increase a person's ability to earn an income and be free from income-poverty as well. The more inclusive the reach of basic education and health care, the more likely it is that even the potentially poor would have a better chance of overcoming poverty (Sen, 1999 p. 90).

Education and health care as capability-builders have been supported in alternate literature as well. Following a review of education and development, Tilak holds that 'education can very significantly influence both income poverty and capability poverty' and that as the two [education and income] are so closely linked, investing in the education of the poor is itself a reduction of capability poverty (Tilak, 2002 p. 15). Likewise, in an exploration of health care in developing countries, Hulme and Lawson concluded that 'health... is central to the understanding of income and capability poverty, while income and capability poverty is central to the understanding of health' (Hulme and Lawson, 2006 p. 5). Like education, health care is deeply intertwined with income as a significant human capability.

In the third claim, Sen maintains that the instrumental relation between low income and low capabilities is *variable* between different communities, within communities, and even between individuals. He sees that the relationship between income and capacity is strongly affected by age, gender, location, social roles, epidemiological atmosphere and other variations over which an individual may have limited or no control (Robeyns, 2005 p. 97, see also Lister, 2004, Sen, 1999 p. 88). As Sen illustrates, the capability of a person with a disability to function well may be less than a person without a disability, despite the former having potentially a higher income and considered 'richer'. This is due to the costs associated with a person overcoming the disability that they have in order to reach similar functioning of a person without a disability. Sen therefore argues that income as a measure of poverty is subject to a variety of influences and fluctuations that are difficult to aggregate in one quantifiable, monetary measurement.

Furthermore, the CA is aware of the apparent 'coupling of disadvantages' (Sen, 1999 p. 88). This occurs when income deprivation couples with truncated capabilities, resulting in a more pronounced difficulty in converting income into functionings. Sen observes that a person with a handicap [such as age, disability or illness] has both a lower ability to earn an income and a higher threshold when converting finance into capability. The costs of medical treatment and/or ability-aids raise the amount of income necessary to achieve the same capability as a non-handicapped person. Sen reasons that public welfare policies that use monetary indicators only will fail to adequately provide for these deprived groups.

Sen argues that a final advantage of the CA over the MA lies in its unit of analysis. The measurement of poverty according to household income can mask individual levels of poverty: whilst household income may be averaged per person to indicate deprivation, this may fail to take into consideration instances when the sharing of resource is disproportionate amongst household members. The systematic 'boy preference' evident in many societies across Asia and North Africa [which occurs when a family's allocation of resources heavily favours male children to the detriment of female children] is an example of disproportionate resource allocation (Sen, 1999 p. 88). Whereas the MA may register members of this family as being equal in terms of resource, the CA seeks to check the deprivation of each member individually [in terms of mortality, morbidity, undernourishment, medical neglect and so forth]. In this way, it is argued that the CA is a more accurate indication of an individual's poverty level than the MA.

The CA indeed has much to offer our understanding of poverty. By focusing primarily on what a person can and chooses to do, it returns the human element to this discussion. However, as with the MA, it is not without its limitations, which shall now be discussed.

3.3.b Assumptions and limitations of the capability approach

In further applying the concept of the CA, a number of suppositions are made which should be discussed in light of the questions raised by Laderchi et al. (2003) and presented on p. 90. In light of both its frequent acclaim and recurrent detractors (see Robeyns, 2000 p. 2), it should be understood that the CA has been developed gradually, and honed frequently, over the last three decades. Its foremost contributor, Sen, acknowledges the interpretational problems that have arisen in its assessment and use, and is aware of the need for continual discussion and refinement (Nussbaum et al., 1993 p. 31, Sen, 1985). It is also important that the CA is understood in its correct light: rather than being a theory to *explain* poverty, well-being or inequality, it ought to be seen as a tool to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* poverty, well-being and inequality (Robeyns, 2005 p. 94).⁴²

It could be argued that the CA shares many parallels with the concept of absolute poverty. Sen himself agreed with the principle of an 'irreducible absolutist core in the idea of poverty', with the most obvious manifestation being malnutrition and starvation (Sen, 1983 p. 159). However, the key difference is found with Sen's continued insistence on the distinction of capabilities above income. The absolutist capabilities of which he insists that every individual should enjoy include both the freedom from starvation, from hunger and from undernourishment; and the ability to enjoy adequate shelter and clothing etc. (see Sen, 1985 p. 670) but also more subjective freedoms such as the participation in communal life, the ability to not appear ashamed in public, and the opportunity to travel to see friends etc. Importantly, Sen does not imply that his idea of absolute capabilities must remain constant regardless of time, place or society [as per the criticism of Rowntree]. His argument accepts that achieving capabilities may require differing levels of income and resources, relative to a society's standard of living, whilst rejecting the notion that an individual's poverty exists only in relativity to his/her contemporaries.

⁴² According to Laderchi, Saith et al., one of the CA's fundamental limitations is its lack of clarification of the causes of poverty. See p. 20 of LADERCHI, C., SAITH, R. & STEWART, F. 2003. Does it matter that we do not agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches. *Oxford Development Studies*, 31, 243-274.

With regards to the sphere of concern, we have noted that Sen has been frequently criticized for not providing a definitive list of valued capabilities. Nussbaum, however, has been more forthcoming, even if her reading of the CA differs somewhat from Sen's. Her piece titled *Women and human development: a study in human capabilities* (Nussbaum, 2000) can be considered an influential attempt by a CA advocate to systematically label its factors. Contrary to Sen, Nussbaum's list is based on her conviction that there is indeed a common consensus between different societies on the understanding of what it means to be fully human⁴³, and it is expressed as such:

- i. Life: normal length of life.
- ii. Health: good health, adequate nutrition and shelter.
- iii. Bodily integrity: movement; choice in reproduction.
- iv. Senses: imagination and thought, informed by education.
- v. Emotions: attachments.
- vi. Practical reason: critical reflection and planning life.
- vii. Affiliation: social interaction; protection against discrimination.
- viii. Other species: respect for and living with other species.
- ix. Play.
- x. Control over one's environment: politically [choice] and materially [property].

(source: Nussbaum, 2000 p. 78-80)

Sabina Alkire, of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, suggests that Sen's deliberate omission is a reflection of a deeper concern for each society to be able to make its own choices for its people and cultures, thus addressing the issue of universality (Alkire, 2002). If this is the case, then Sen's approach rejects the notion that defining poverty is the task of the professional theorist, but rather it belongs to the democratic process of the general public (Robeyns, 2005 p. 106). On the contrary, Nussbaum does enter the debate from the viewpoint of a professional theorist. While she has intended to present what she sees as a 'fully international' option (2000 p. 74) that has been developed from 'years of cross cultural discussion' (2000 p. 76), her contribution

⁴³ A side observation is that Nussbaum frequently uses great literary [secular] narratives, such as the Greek tragedies, to assess a culture's moral reflection and expression of values. An interesting piece has been written by John Barton, who proposes that biblical narrative texts could be analysed or commented on in the style of Nussbaum, bridging the gap between historical studies and literary studies of biblical texts. See: BARTON, J. 1996. Reading for life: the use of the Bible in ethics and the work of Martha C Nussbaum. In: ROGERSON, J. W., DAVIES, M. & CARROLL, M. D. (eds.) *The Bible in ethics: the Second Sheffield Colloquium*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

has still been criticized as a 'Western late-twentieth century conception of the "good life"...' (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 17).

Various attempts to recreate such a list do generate similar items, and have been found to typically narrow down to three essentials: health, nutrition and education – effectively the same list of essentials identified in Basic Needs approaches. However, we would do well to recognize the vulnerability of the CA, should no formal clarity arise. Alkire (2005) reminds us of World Bank documents using the term 'capabilities' to mean 'health and education' – a somewhat different communication of the approach to that outlined by Sen. Whilst contextual interpretation is a strength of the CA, it risks becoming a liability if users stray too far from the original concepts.

The objectification of a poverty line [between the poor and non-poor] has its challenges in the CA. By necessity, this field has a tendency to measure 'functioning' [life-expectancy, literacy etc.] as a proxy to 'capabilities'. To illustrate, the Human Poverty Index developed by the United Nations Development Programme [hereafter UNDP], which is derived primarily from the CA, chose 'longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living' as the three essential elements of human life (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 18). This raises the first question of whether these are valid and objective proxies for capabilities. Setting cut-off lines for seemingly arbitrary indices such as 'decent standard of living' would appear to be both context-dependent and perforated with inherent value-judgements of external assessors. Both of these should be considered as fundamental limitations of the CA.

Another telling measure of the CA's level of universality is evident in the UNDP's adoption of a different level of indicators for developed and developing countries. When selecting indicators to represent the three aforementioned 'essential elements' in a developing country, the UNDP selected a) having less than 40 years life expectancy at birth, b) adult illiteracy, and c) effective economic provisioning [measured by the number of people not using improved water sources and the number of children under five who are underweight]. Yet the UNDP altered these indicators for developed countries to be a) 60 years life expectancy at birth, b) functional illiteracy amongst adults, and c) long-term unemployment rate and income falling below 50 per cent of the median disposable household income for the country being measured (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 18, and Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and United Nations Development Programme, 2010 p. 14). Reconciling the universalist ideal of the CA with a relativist method of measurement causes logical inconsistencies, and these are yet to be fully explored in the literature.

Replacing the traditional notion of poverty [lack of income] with a wider understanding [lack of capabilities] also raises the question of aggregation. Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 19) offer two views on aggregation: the view of *union* [an individual deprived of any capability is considered poor], and the view of *intersection* [only an individual deprived in all capabilities is considered poor]. The former view maintains that each capability is so intrinsically valuable that no trade-offs should be accepted. The latter accepts that an extreme achievement in one capability may indeed render another capability less vital or influential in determining a person's well-being. Neither is unequivocally supported in the literature.

The way we consider aggregating capabilities can also lead to the same sort of peculiarities noticed in the relative approach in section 3.2.b. Consider an economically wealthy person restricted by severe illness and thus experiencing a reduced capability to perform certain functions: would they be considered in poverty? A 'union' approach would insist that the reduction of any capability [in this case relating to health] classes the person as poor, whereas an 'intersectional' approach might suggest that the person's extreme achievement economically can offset the physical deprivation, and might class the person as non-poor. A lack of definition on the topic of aggregation is certainly a limitation of the CA.

Perhaps the most vigorous criticism of the CA is that of individualism (Robeyns, 2000, Laderchi et al., 2003, Comim, 2001). This critique is concerned that the formal reference unit of the approach is the individual, and that the approach labels capability deprivation as a characteristic failure of individuals, irrespective of the influence of their familial or social groups, or unimpeded by institutional mechanisms. Yet Robeyns sees this criticism as a confusion of merging two perspectives of individualism – ethical and ontological – into one. She reasons that ethical individualism maintains that 'individuals, and only individuals are units of moral concern' (Robeyns, 2000 p. 16). All evaluations of social affairs and public policy should be measured according to the effect that they have on the life of individuals. Ontological individualism, on the other hand, states that 'only individuals and their property exists... nothing is more than the sum of individuals and their properties' (2000 p. 17). Relational interactions and social forces are of little importance to this ontological stance. This is an important observation by Robeyns.

Robeyns further asserts that the CA indeed embraces ethical individualism by placing a high value on the capabilities and functionings of an individual. It is concerned first and foremost with the well-being and fulfilment of the individual. However, she then proposes that this does not lead it to necessarily embrace ontological individualism. She contends that the very nature of Sen's suggestion on 'capabilities' as different to 'functionings' gives room for social and environmental influences. Capabilities may remain in the realm of the individual, but the conversion of these capabilities into functionings requires social interplay (Robeyns, 2000 p. 17). This social interplay may influence functionings in one of two ways. Firstly, a boy living in Madagascar with his bike may have the same 'capability' as a similar boy living in a Dutch village. However, in order for the boys to convert this capability into 'functionings', they must interact with social forces – is it safe to ride a bike on the streets? Will it be stolen? Will there be sufficient streetlights at night? Secondly, social factors will affect each boy's motivation for riding the bike – where is the destination? If it is school, will both boys deem it important enough to ride the bike to get there, or will one's attitude towards the destination cause him to go only if offered a lift in a motorized vehicle? In this example, both the safety of a society, and the motivation of an individual, are likely to be shaped by factors external to the individual, yet they will still persist in changing his ability to convert his capabilities into functionings. It is this response that has been offered as a rejoinder to criticism of the CA's perceived individualistic nature.

The model of capability poverty should be respected for addressing many of the obvious limitations in the MA. It makes a convincing contribution to our understanding of welfare and fittingly places poverty in the realm of what it means to be human. Nevertheless, we have discussed significant limitations that have become apparent and must be understood if we choose to use this as a primary source of measurement.

3.3.c The capability approach in practice

In discussing the CA in practice, it is important to recall that not all applications of the approach are based upon empirical evidence. Much of its application, particularly in its formative years, was aimed at critiquing existing social practices. Recent applications, though more empirically based, have typically relied on using existing data and surveys that were not explicitly designed to gather data on functionings, nor capabilities. It would seem that researchers are increasingly addressing this limitation (see Robeyns, 2006).

The CA has been adopted in at least nine different manners, according to Robeyns (2006), but it is the implementation by the UNDP that is the most prominent. Largely inspired by the CA, the UNDP often favours the umbrella term 'human development' in its discussions of national poverty and wealth. Using four indicators [life expectancy at birth; mean years of schooling for adults currently aged 25 years; expected years of schooling for current newborns; and Gross National Income per capita], the UNDP formulates a composite 'Human Development Index', or HDI (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). National results have been published in the annual *Human Development Report* since 1990. The UNDP contends that the HDI is a more complete picture of a country's average achievements in three areas of basic human development: health, knowledge and income. Each country is given a HDI of between 0-1; with the country holding the highest average achievement granted the score of 1. The HDI is then translated to a descriptive label of the nation's Human Development ranking: from 'Very High', to 'High', 'Medium' or 'Low' (United Nations Development Programme, 2010).

In 2011, the United Nations Development Programme (2011 pp. 127-130) reported that the 'Very High' HDI populations were typically European, North American and Oceanic [1 – Norway, 0.943; 2 – Australia, 0.929; 3 – Netherlands, 0.910], whilst the 'Low' HDI nations were predominantly Sub-Saharan African [185 – Burundi, 0.316; 186 – Niger, 0.295; 187 Democratic Republic of Congo, 0.286]. During the period 2000-2011, all surveyed countries were reported as increasing their HDI (pp. 131-134): 'Very High' countries experienced an annual average growth of 0.33 per cent, 'High' countries experienced 0.70 per cent, 'Medium' countries experienced 1.28 per cent and 'Low' experienced 1.59 per cent. Globally, the world saw a 0.66 per cent increase in HDI values.

In addition to international comparisons, a small number of researchers have endeavoured to apply the CA to individuals in advanced economies. In an Italian survey of 281 'officially poor' households, Alessandro Balestrino found slightly more than a quarter were only functionings-poor [based on education, nutrition and health], slightly less than a quarter were only income-poor, and almost half were poor in both fields (as cited in Robeyns, 2006 p. 365). The practical implications of this should be of interest: perhaps in-kind transfers might be more effective than cash-transfers in increasing development?

In recent years, the CA – particularly as presented by Sen – has become an influential shaper of the poverty discourse. As more capability-friendly tools are designed to measure poverty, this seems set to rise. However, to fully understand what this approach means in practice, we must endeavour to discern how it comprehends the causes of poverty. We will now turn our attention to this question.

3.3.d The causes of poverty according to the capability approach

From the outset, we must remember that the CA is not a theory to *explain* poverty, well-being or inequality. It is a tool to *conceptualize* and *evaluate* poverty, well-being and inequality. Its inability to capture the fundamental causes of poverty [exclusive from income deprivation] has been described as one of its most serious limitations (Laderchi et al., 2003). In fact, through the CA Sen explicitly seeks to redirect the understanding of the nature and causes of poverty away from *means* [e.g. income] and towards the *ends* that people seek [e.g. nutrition], and the freedom that they have to satisfy these ends (Sen, 1999 p. 90).

With this in mind, it is little wonder the difficulties one faces when trying to draw a conclusion as to the causes of poverty through the lens of the CA. However, close study does allow for a number of comments to be drawn. Firstly, we have established that poverty arises from an absence of, or failure to realize, capability (Sen, 1999 p. 106). Furthermore, capabilities are achieved through an amalgamation of opportunities and freedoms (p. 108). Thus we can reason that poverty arises when an individual has a breakdown of either opportunities or freedoms.

Let us first consider opportunities. Robeyns (2005 p. 99) describes how opportunities arise as a person converts a commodity into a functioning. However, when a person does not have access to a specific commodity – or they experience failure in converting it into a function – they will not realize their opportunity. Conversion failure can occur on a personal level [intelligence, reading level, physical condition etc.], a social level [social norms, discrimination, power relations] or an environmental level [climate, location]. The person must then have discretionary use of this opportunity. They may choose to use it, or not. A person who is denied the option to use an opportunity, or conversely is forced to use it, lacks the freedom necessary to be accurately described as having *capability*. Note that there is a substantial distinction between having the freedom to use, and actually using (Sen, 2005 pp. 154-155).

Whilst capability advocates, including Sen and Nussbaum, are averse to stating explicit causes of poverty, we can conclude from the literature that the following diagram might be appropriate:

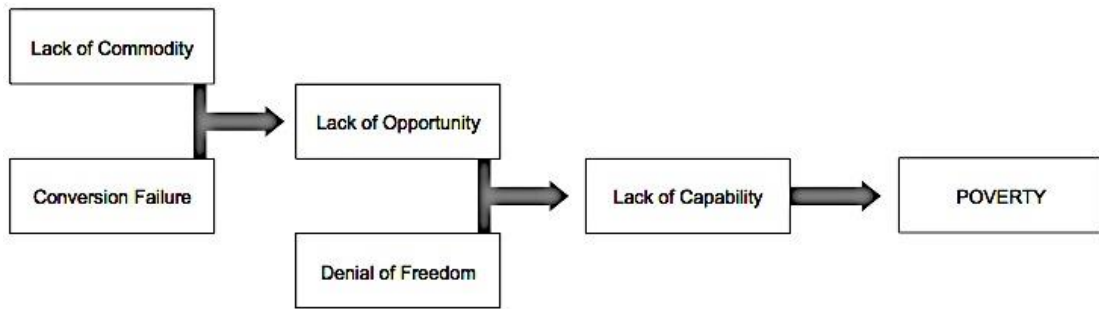


Figure 4: Summary of the causes of poverty [CA]

This thought process summarizes the causes of poverty according to the CA with reasonable accuracy. Whilst it retains the nature of the approach – a sense of reluctance for specific demarcation – it provides a useful tool for conceptualization.

3.3.e Summary and critique

Despite its relatively new arrival in the development discussion, the CA has rapidly influenced our understanding of poverty. Its primary voices, Sen and Nussbaum, have developed a person-centric model that focuses on the end goals of the individual life: does a person have effective opportunities to engage in, and be, who they want to be? The idea has been received by such organizations as the United Nations as it prepared the Human Development Index, and we should expect continued evolution for some time.

The CA's focus on what is intrinsically important, over what is instrumentally important, resonates more with the biblical value of human dignity. It expands on the MA's sphere of concern and includes characteristics beyond simple financial proxies. Sen's tentative list – political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, protective securities – is a closer representation of the Bible's understanding of humans as multidimensional beings that are expected to enjoy a degree of personal freedom and autonomy [Genesis 1:28]. Sen's form also values the checks and balances needed to maintain just human interactions and prevent exploitation, which is biblically supported [see Deuteronomy 17:18-20]. It recognizes that both access to a commodity and the ability to convert it are necessary to create opportunity, thus accepting that absolute items have relative value according to localisation. An example of this is

found in Amos 5, where the prophet criticizes the excessive rent charged by the wealthy to the poor: though the commodity [currency] might be absolute and stable, the poor person is unable to convert it into rent because of excessive prices required of them in their time and location. Hence their poverty continues and deepens.

In a way though, the strength of Sen's approach is that it operates at an almost abstract level: he reaches beyond the traditional, concrete concepts of poverty to grasp the less-defined, abstract, complexities of poverty. Yet in its strength lies a weakness, for it can become difficult to "pin-down" his ideas into concrete resolutions that are absent of ambiguities. The deliberate haziness in not specifying a preferred set of capabilities runs the risk of manipulation which, when taken to the extreme, can result in a meaningless interpretation that strays far from the original intent.

However, there are a few elements with the CA that we believe should be revisited following engagement with our biblical reading. On the positive side, the CA rightfully recognizes the importance of the individual. We have seen that the CA upholds ethical individualism and places a strong importance on the capabilities, functionings and fulfilment of an individual. This is in line with the biblical critique of the MA [discussed in section 3.2.d]. Yet through the lens of a biblical anthropology, it is difficult to not think of this approach as somewhat idealistic. By focussing strongly on what a person is able to achieve, it glaringly misses instances where the individual fails because of their own errors – the immoral traits raised in the MA, or in Wright's model: laziness. Perhaps this arises from the underlying foundation of humanism – the enduring belief that humans are on a continuum of progression and free from the hindrance of sin and decadence.

We note that this individualistic nature is a potential flaw, as the CA is also largely silent on the interaction of individuals with groups and communities. Therefore, we reject any hint of the ontological individualism that may arise in this approach, and insist that any notion of capabilities must consider social interactions, relational dependencies and communal responsibilities.

We also note that in his preference for a democratic discussion of capabilities, Sen has taken a somewhat relativist strategy. This is problematic on two fronts. Theoretically, his insistence on the democratic process to determine accepted capabilities – in the hope to bypass cultural bias – is already imposing a cultural bias upon the process: the bias that the democratic process is indeed

a superior form of deliberation. Theologically, it adheres to the humanist belief that the human experience and rational thinking are the only source of both knowledge and moral code, which is at odds with the biblical view that God is the source of knowledge and morality, and human reasoning will be judged according to God's standard [Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 19:9; 57:10; 119:160; Isaiah 55:8; Jeremiah 17:10]. We therefore see that an appeal to biblical revelation would be more appropriate than relativist or democratic reasoning.

Finally, we are disturbed by the interpretation that allows for differing expectations between countries and people groups [see p. 124]. We reject any supposition that essentially accepts a lower standard of capability for certain people groups, and insist that our goal for each person should be equal, regardless of birthplace, gender, race, religion or creed.

It is also unsurprising that the CA makes no reference to God, or rebellion against God, as a reason for poverty. Like the MA, this approach is a purely nonspiritual instrument for recognizing poverty and cannot be expected to include religious features. References to the concept of natural causes – the capabilities of safety, resilience, or a lack of vulnerability – are also noticeably absent from Sen's writings, though might be reflected by Nussbaum's notions of health and bodily integrity [p. 123].

Following CA, there is an alternative approach that is more vocal of the role of group interaction in poverty and development: 'social exclusion'. We will now turn our attention to this model.

3.4 Social Exclusion

Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent on them, and of being forced to accept rudeness, insults, and indifference when we seek help.

— a voice from Latvia 1998, as cited in Narayan et al. (2000 p. 26)

Within modern, developed nations, where national wealth is high and absolute poverty is arguably rare if not non-existent, it can be argued that poverty and deprivation still manifests itself amongst certain sections of the community. As is referenced in our Latvian example, this manifestation is more social than material, with an underlying theme of segregation. This type of poverty is often understood under the heading of 'Social Exclusion'.

3.4.a Background

This concept of SE particularly describes the process of collective ostracism and resource deprivation that can surface even within rich countries with widespread benefit programs, and has been a particularly influential aspect of the social policy in contemporary Europe. The European Union has opted to describe SE as a 'process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live' (Deakin et al., 1995 p. 129).

It has been suggested that the theoretical roots of SE lie in classical sociology, as groups seek to secure and maintain their own privileges at the expense of groups whom they view as different to them. More recently though, its modern origin has been traced to France in the 1970s and 1980s, where certain groups were becoming increasingly marginalized as they managed to fall through the French social insurance system. The term 'social exclusion' is attributed to Richard Lenoir who, in 1974, used it to refer to those who were not safeguarded by the French welfare state and were considered social misfits. The term 'socially excluded' included the 'mentally and physically handicapped, the aged and invalid, drug users, delinquents, suicidal people and so on...' (Saith, 2001 p. 3). Large policy shifts in the 1970s and 1980s, centred on privatisation and deregulation, were accompanied by rising redundancy and economic vulnerability, and the 'excluded' population began to also encompass the long term unemployed. It became recognized that employment not only secured income, but also galvanized an individual's social network and community participation. There was, then, an ever-increasing segment of society for whom social participation became progressively fragmented: the socially excluded [note that the term 'social exclusion' is recognized as predominantly European. A similar, though not identical group of people in North America might be referred to as the 'underclass', according to Saith (2001)].

Importantly, SE should be seen as a complement to the traditional understanding of poverty, rather than a specifically new insight. Like Townsend's theory of relative poverty, SE indeed seeks to consider an individual's well-being according to the status of the community in which they live. However, it looks beyond monetary proxies of well-being, towards indicators such as unemployment, access to housing, minimal income, citizenship, democratic rights and social contacts (Laderchi et al., 2003 pp. 21-22). In this way, SE can be seen as sharing similarities with both the Relative MA and the CA. Indeed, it has been said that where the MA focuses on *goods*

and the CA focuses on *functionings*, SE focuses on *rights*: the rights of an individual to be included in human society (Lister, 2004 p. 90).

Despite its prominence, many authors still express difficulty in placing an absolute definition on SE, and therefore interpret it differently (see Burchardt et al., 1999 p. 228, Saith, 2001 p. 3, Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 22, and Lister, 2004 p. 74). In fact, it has been noted by Brown University's Hillary Silver:

Observers in fact only agree on a single point: the impossibility to define the status of the 'excluded' by a single and unique criterion. Reading numerous enquiries and reports on exclusion reveals a profound confusion amongst experts (originally noted by Weinberg and Ruano-Borbalan 1993, here translated by Silver, 1995 p. 59).

However, a large proportion of definitions of SE would include the following characteristics:

- a. a person is resident in a society, but
- b. for reasons beyond his/her control, they cannot participate in normal activities of citizens in that society, and
- c. they would like to do so.⁴⁴

(source: Burchardt et al., 1999 p. 229)

Nevertheless, even this proposal is not without its concerns when it is addressed systematically. Condition [a] ensures a specific requirement of SE: that the individual is geographically connected with the society. A person living in India is not socially excluded from the United Kingdom, as they are not geographically connected to UK society but are instead likely to be connected to a society in India. This condition is generally accepted in all propositions of SE (Burchardt et al., 1999, Barry, 2002).

What constitutes the 'normal activities of citizens' of condition [b] is a question that warrants further exploration. Burchardt, Le Grand et al. have endeavoured to define what they would constitute as an accurate representation of Britain during the early 1990s [their time of writing]. Whist recognizing that the norms of a society vary across culture and time, they have tentatively suggested the following to be the 'normal activities' of British citizens:

⁴⁴ It has been proposed that [a] and [b] may equate to exclusion, regardless of the person's interest in inclusion [c]. See BARRY, B. 2002. Social exclusion, social isolation and the distribution of income. In: HILLS, J., LE GRAND, J. & PIACHAUD, D. (eds.) *Understanding social exclusion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Consumption activity:** consuming at least the minimum level of goods and services that are considered normal for the society.
- **Savings activity:** providing a personal security net for times of reduced income/increased expenditure, and providing investment potential.
- **Production activity:** engaging in an economically or socially valuable activity.
- **Political activity:** engaging in the process of improving the social and physical environment, including voting and campaigning.
- **Social activity:** being part of a family, group or community that provides social interaction and emotional support.

(source: Burchardt et al., 1999 p. 231)

Continuing this theme, Burchardt, Le Grand et al. provide indicators they consider to correspond with being socially excluded from the named activity (1999 p. 233). These include having an income under half the mean equivalized household income [excluded from consumption activity], no savings over GBP £2000, not contributing to or receiving a pension, or not an owner-occupier [excluded from savings activity], not engaged in employment, education, training, child-raising or retired [excluded from production activity], not voting in the 1992 general election and not a member of a political or campaigning organization [excluded from political activity], and finally, lacking someone who can offer support, appreciation, relaxation and dependency [excluded from social activity].

Resuming our discussion on the definition of SE, we see that [b] and [c] refer to *agency*, and are more contentious. At first glance it might seem that only those forcibly rejected from society should be considered excluded, and a person who voluntarily withdraws from society is not for they have chosen to isolate themselves. However, as Barry (2002) observes, some groups withdraw from society because of open hostility or because they perceive that they will not be able to participate in the greater society. In this instance, such voluntary exclusion has essentially risen from factors beyond their control. It is also possible that the exclusion of a particular group – even if voluntarily and under no duress – could be undesirable for the society as a whole [from the viewpoint of social cohesion, or the contribution that the majority stands to lose if the minority withdraws]. This thought could, however, lead to the somewhat peculiar implication of denying a minority group the right to voluntary exclusion on the basis that the majority will suffer from their absence. Our response to these questions is of course seated in a deeper paradigm – we must first ask ourselves if, and why,

we believe social exclusion to be exclusively undesirable? Our response to this could direct our acceptance of conditions [b] and [c] (see Burchardt et al., 1999 p. 230, Barry, 2002 p. 14).

3.4.b Assumptions and limitations of social exclusion

SE has a number of identified limitations that must also be considered in the light of Laderchi et al. (2003) questions. Initially, the approach was developed with the aim to explain how it can be that developed countries – specifically those in Europe who enjoy extensive social security programs – can still experience untenable levels of deprivation and marginalization. This, however, immediately delivers the challenge of universality: how effectively can the SE approach be applied in developing countries? To a large extent, Laderchi et al. (2003) agree with the universal suitability of the essential characteristics that have been proposed. Yet they find it difficult to reconcile the indicators of these, such as employment in the formal sector or social insurance, within the developing world context where relatively few people enjoy these opportunities. Not taking part in such activities may not actually be synonymous with social exclusion, or poverty, in a great proportion of the world's countries.

The selection of appropriate indicators in a developing world context is not only a question of universality, but also of objectivity. Who has the right to determine the inclusion and exclusion of the indicators? Laderchi, Saith et al. propose a number of responses to this challenge, including adopting social norms from outside of the community [e.g. from a developed country], or using empirical data to find what characteristics of a population [race, gender and so forth] correlate with exclusion in other approaches, and responding accordingly. Alternatively, to align with the spirit of Sen's CA, the determination of the key indicators may be best left to democratic consultation within the appropriate society (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 22). It should be put forth, however, that any suggestion of delegation to the professional 'experts' carries a specific risk: it could be argued that those determining the meaning of SE are affiliates of the very group seen as being the excludors. This may be a specific reality in societies where social exclusion is an accepted element of the society, as with the caste system of India.

3.4.c Social exclusion in practice

Empirically, research linking monetary poverty with SE has produced mixed results. Lister (2004 pp. 84-85) cites studies that have shown a clear association between income and exclusion from

productive activities, between income and children's exclusion from social activities and services, and between extreme income poverty and social isolation. However, she also found a distinct lack of support for any association between [non-extreme] poverty and social isolation. In fact, Lister cites a British study by David Page that found members of a deprived housing estate were 'mostly well integrated with their local community.' If this is the case, Page suggests, a specific feature of SE that must be recognized is the disconnectedness from people *outside* of one's social group, particularly those who could be a connection to further opportunities and experiences.

This difficulty in providing a clear empirical link between poverty and social exclusion has been further explored by Lister (2004 pp. 82-83). She proposes that the poverty/social exclusion relationship should not be seen as synonymous, but either as 'causal/sequential' or 'descriptive'. In the first case, she suggests a causal relationship: poverty may lead to social exclusion, and social exclusion may lead to poverty. Her alternate, somewhat richer proposition is to describe the relationship between the two as that of 'Nesting' [A] and [B] or of 'Overlapping' [C], and is illustrated in Figure 5, as adapted from Lister (2004 pp. 82-83):

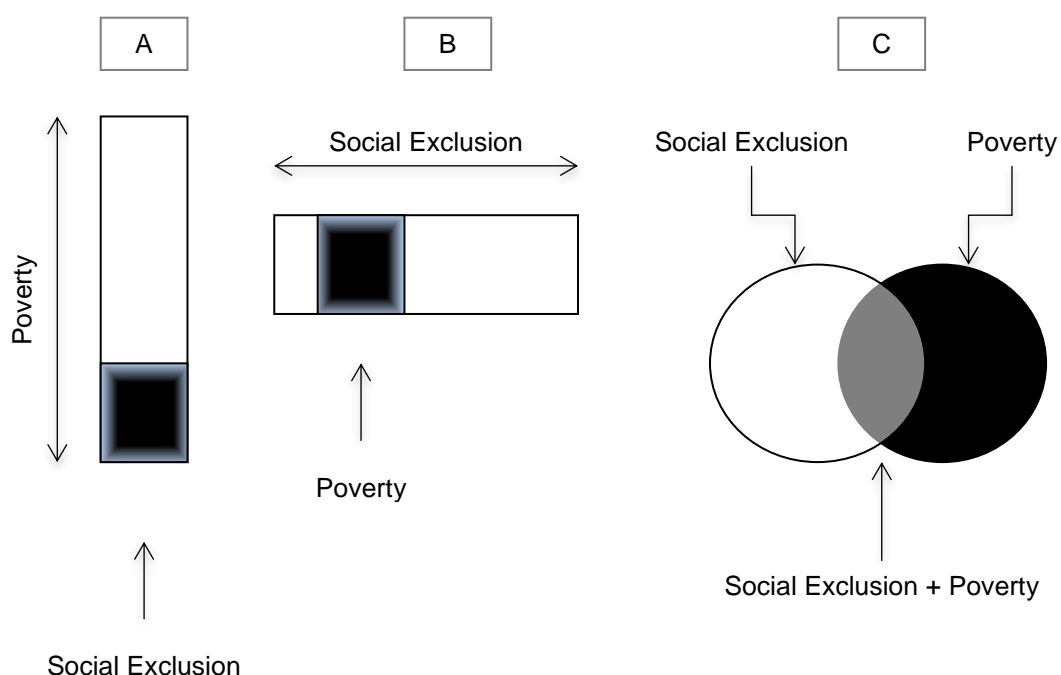


Figure 5: Descriptive relationships between poverty and SE

This proves to be a very insightful approach. The first Nesting description [A] indicates that within an impoverished segment of a society, there is likely to be two subsections: a subset that despite its poverty still manages to engage in society in some capacity, and a further, lesser subset that

finds itself socially excluded from the activities of the society. The latter Nesting description [B] implies that there is [for various reasons] a wider group of socially excluded persons, and only within this group is found a smaller subset of impoverished people. The Overlapping depiction [C] suggests that there is a group of people who are poor, another group who are excluded, and a minority who find they are overlapping and experiencing both forms of deprivation.

In policy, the United Kingdom has been particularly enthusiastic in adopting the concept of SE. Lister (2004) sees the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit by the New Labour Government in 1997 as perhaps the first example of an Anglo lean towards a European, rather than a North American, discourse on poverty [as of yet SE has gained little ground in the US political arena]. The 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain [PSE survey] was considered the first national attempt to measure social exclusion in Britain by identifying segments of the population who were excluded from owning or participating in socially-recognized 'necessities' (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000). A list of 35 items were identified by a population survey as socially necessary for adults living in Britain, ranging from 'beds and bedding for everyone' [first on the list, as identified by 95 per cent of respondents] and 'heating to warm living areas of the home' [second, 94 per cent] to a dictionary [34th, 53 per cent] and 'an outfit for social occasions' [35th, 51 per cent]. Respondents were then asked to indicate both the items that they didn't have and couldn't afford, and the items that they didn't have, but could afford. Those who identified at least two items that they wanted, but couldn't afford, were considered 'poor'. Those who had relatively high incomes, but could not yet afford the items were considered 'risen out of poverty recently', whilst people who had relatively low incomes but no lack were considered 'vulnerable to poverty' and the remaining were considered 'not poor'. The results of the 1999 PSE survey indicated that 26 per cent of British respondents [14.5 million individuals] were unable to obtain the required number of social necessities and were considered 'poor'. 62 per cent were not poor, 10 per cent were vulnerable and only 2 per cent had risen out of poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000 p. 18).

Burchardt et al. (1999) took another approach in their quest to empirically support the notion of SE. Returning to their five-dimension framework [consumption, savings, productivity, political engagement and social interaction], they analysed data from the British Household Panel Survey of 1991-1995 [BHPS] to discern the extent of exclusion on each dimension during the time period, whether there was poly-dimensional exclusion and any link between monetary-poverty and

exclusion. Highlights of their findings include the indication that Low Income [consumption activity] was the most common form of exclusion [23 per cent in 1995], and Socially Isolated was the least common [9.5 per cent in 1995] (p. 234). Low Income and Low Wealth [savings activity] showed a U-shaped distribution: the 16-24 age group and the very old were most likely to be both income-poor and wealth-poor (p. 236). Social isolation was low and reasonably equal in all groups (p. 236). When results were probed for evidence of poly-dimensional exclusion, the authors found that over half the sample were not excluded in any dimension, approximately 27 per cent experienced a single exclusion and less than 1 per cent experienced all five in any given year (p. 236). An individual with Low Wealth [savings activity] was most likely to experience other exclusions [correlation coefficient = 0.677], whilst a socially isolated person was least likely to experience other exclusions [correlation coefficient = 0.401], and in all events there was found to be a positive correlation between the dimensions that were statistically significant (p. 237). More noticeably, however, was the trend in exclusion over the five years measured: the authors report that 'the longitudinal measures of exclusion are more strongly associated with each other than the cross-sectional measures' (p. 241)

Admittedly, these two studies have taken different approaches to investigating SE. The 1999 PSE Survey used low income as a base and sought to ascertain if it would reduce an individual's ability to engage in a particular societal 'necessity'; the 1991-1995 BHPS sought more to determine whether an individual excluded in one dimension would have a greater likelihood of being excluded in another. We have found that low income is strongly correlated with other areas of exclusion, but conclude that the dimensions of exclusion are best thought of as separate entities and caution against amalgamating them into one single category of the 'socially excluded'.

3.4.d The causes of social exclusion

From the outset, we have recognized that the strength of the SE model is its emphasis on the *process* of becoming poor, not just the outcome of poverty. Gore and Figueiredo articulate this process as a '...causal analysis of various paths into and out of poverty, getting beyond the unhelpful lumping together of diverse categories of people as 'the poor' (Gore and Figueiredo, 1997 p. 10). Alcock (2006 p. 122) and Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 21) both present SE favourably in their literature. SE is of particular interest to us because it deliberately seeks to engage with the aetiology of poverty, not just the identity of the poor.

Atkinson and Hills (1998) present three key features of SE that assist our understanding of its causes: *relativity*, *agency* and *dynamics*. Relativity is perhaps the most prominent claim of this notion. Differing from Townsend's 'relativity', the 'relativity' of SE supposes that exclusion is a result of ruptured social relations between an individual or group, and the society in which they live. Ruptured social relations may result in an excluded group having limited social participation in a community's key activities, or limited social interaction with the community as a whole (Atkinson and Hills, 1998 pp. 13-14, see also Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 21, Lister, 2004 pp. 89-91, Alcock, 2006 p. 122). The interest that the social exclusionist has for group relations is a specific aspect of relativity that is in contrast with the MA and CA. The social exclusionist argues that while segregation affects an individual, such segregation is usually the result of that individual's affiliation with a specific group. Thus SE is concerned with social divisions, not just individual circumstances; ruptured relationships, not a lack of assets or abilities. Alongside income, such divisions may be based on age, race, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity or any number of other communal delineations that create a strained association between the 'included' and the 'excluded'. Affiliation with such socially excluded groups negatively affects an individual's ability to purchase certain goods or services, participate in economically or socially valuable activity, be involved in political decision-making or to generally interact on a social level with family, friends and the community.

Agency implies an action of not only an 'excluee', but also of an 'excludor.' (Atkinson and Hills, 1998 p. 14). The excludor, typically a more powerful party [individuals, but also the prevailing social, political and economic structures and institutions], may act in a way as to make inclusion in society difficult for the excludee. An example of this might include social housing allocations, which 'segregate the poorest into the worst areas... [confirming] the stigmatised and residualised role of social housing' and thus continuing the cycle of poverty (Pawson and Kintrea, 2002 p. 663). Notably, the agent of exclusion may be considered either active or passive. A deliberate policy to deny social rights to immigrants might be considered an active act on behalf of an excludor, whereas an authority's failure to implement an effective social security net for the unemployed might be considered a passive act of exclusion.

In another way, Barry observes that when a wealthy segment of the population chooses to isolate themselves from wider society, economic resource and job opportunities fail to trickle down to other

segments of the community – a situation he labels as ‘voluntary exclusion’ or ‘social isolation’; while Richardson and Le Grand label it ‘withdrawal’ (Barry, 2002 p. 16, Richardson and Le Grand, 2002 p. 509). This can occur when the wealthiest fraction of a society voluntarily opts out of common institutions [schools, universities, sports and community clubs to name but a few] and community activity, effectively insulating them from the poorer majority. This raises the potential for two ‘exclusion lines’: a low one [between those who regularly participate in mainstream activities and those below who are excluded from them] and a high one [between the middle groups and those above who voluntarily detach themselves].⁴⁵ We have illustrated this in Figure 6, adapted from Barry (2002 p. 17):

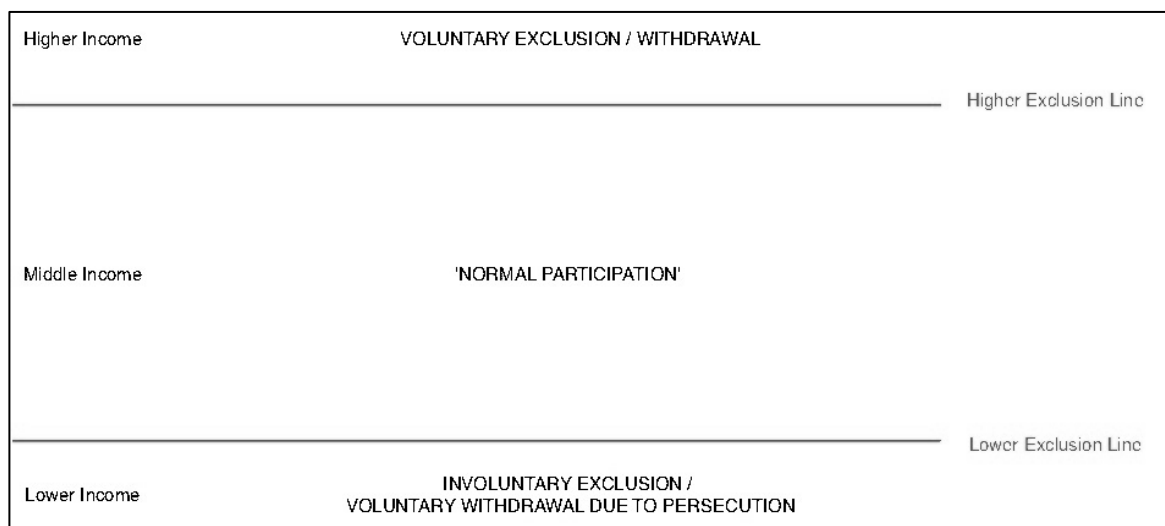


Figure 6: Lines of exclusion [SE]

It is this feature of agency that significantly distinguishes SE from MA and CA: it both attributes substantial liability for poverty to the more powerful members of society, and it transfers considerable responsibility to them for improving the situation (Laderchi et al., 2003).⁴⁶

Dynamics is the final distinctive feature of SE, and refers to exclusion being a dynamic process of becoming poor, rather than a static condition of being poor (Atkinson and Hills, 1998). The process has been summarized by saying that ‘...some disadvantages lead to some exclusion, which in turn

⁴⁵ This idea is called ‘social polarisation’ by Townsend. See p. 316 of TOWNSEND, P. & WALKER, A. 2010. *The Peter Townsend reader*, Bristol, UK, Policy.

⁴⁶ The onus of responsibility, however, is not only laid on the powerful. The French Revenu Minimum d'Insertion [a form of conditional social assistance introduced in 1988] is presented as a ‘contract of inclusion’, and charges individuals with the responsibility to pursue and equip themselves for inclusion in response to the opportunities presented by the government. See p. 79 of LISTER, R. 2004. *Poverty, Key Concepts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

leads to more disadvantages and more exclusion and ends up with persistent multiple disadvantages', and the excludee is likened to someone who is 'slipping from a point of keeping their heads above water, through "sinking", to "drowning"... [and] possibly involving a simultaneous process of detachment from social institutions' (Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 21, Lister, 2004 p. 81). The advantage of recognizing exclusion as a process is the subsequent potential to identify the key entry and exit points of poverty: what prospects does an individual or group have for a descending trajectory and, theoretically, what would be required to effectively halt and reverse this course?

When an individual or group is failing to achieve inclusion, Atkinson and Hills (1998 p. 14) remind us that we must be concerned not only with their situation, but also the extent to which they are responsible. Therefore the fundamental question that underlies this discourse is the one of agency: who is doing the excluding, and why?

3.4.e Summary and critique

The concept of SE has added a rich dimension to our understanding of the aetiology of poverty. By extending poverty beyond a lack of material resource and drawing attention to social relations and interplay, we may begin to see more of the underlying causes of deprivation. As we saw on p. 136, SE is related to poverty, but not necessarily equal. However, we see that there are significant connections between SE and biblical understandings, particularly that of oppression.

The point of relativity is strongly supported in the biblical literature. The Bible recognizes that individuals operate within communities and that groups can be discriminated against because of their differences. The paradigm of this predicament are the widow, orphan and foreigner – all recognized by God to be particularly vulnerable groups [Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:13; 27:19; Jeremiah 7:6; 22:3; Zechariah 7:9-10; Malachi 3:5]. Denied the same opportunities for recovery that an average poor, male, adult Israelite would have – no land, status or respect – their survival was based on their continued connection with the more resourced groups in Israelite society.

The point of agency is also firmly observable in Scripture. The commands of God recognized that both exploitation and voluntary withdrawal would be detrimental to the poorer groups. We have

seen through section 2.3.c numerous denunciations of oppressive behaviour, most pointedly in the Prophets:

- ‘...they sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of sandals. These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless also turn aside the way of the humble...’ [Amos 2:6b-7a].
- ‘You impose heavy rent on the poor, and exact a tribute of grain from them’ [5:11a].
- ‘You who distress the righteous and accept bribes and turn aside the poor in the gate’ [5:12].

We have also seen from Deuteronomy 24 the expectation that the wealthy would not shield their resources from those who needed access to them for survival. The community as a whole were also expected to contribute to a tri-annual feast for these poor [Deuteronomy 14:28-29] and the priests were expected to lower the costs of taking part in certain religious ceremonies [Leviticus 14:21-22]. All care was to be taken to ensure that one person or group did not disadvantage – by exploitation or withdrawal – another person or group.

The point of dynamics is also noticeably evident in the texts. We have already argued that numerous biblical texts recognize poverty is more often than not the result of a dynamic process which causes one to slide downward, rather than a static condition of being impoverished [though it could be argued that the Proverbs is an exception to this understanding]. As Jacobs explains: ‘the biblical and rabbinic understanding of poverty as a transitory state of being, while perhaps springing from the economic and social realities of an agricultural society, offers us a theology that discourages fatalistic approaches to poverty’ (Jacobs, 2010 p. 52). It could be reasoned that the earlier biblical texts, situated in an agricultural society, were primarily focussed on ensuring the poor had access to the resources they needed to feed and care for themselves. Meanwhile the later texts, located in a society that was becoming increasingly urbanized, were concerned with the institutional corruption that was increasing the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the few to the detriment of the many.

Of all the approaches, SE carries with it the closest connection to the biblical idea of sin. Though never explicitly stated – nor should we expect it to, given it is a secular approach – the approach

implies a degree of selfishness or greed [or at the very least, negligence by omission] on behalf of the more powerful parties. By withholding the power to do good towards their disaffected neighbours, the stronger groups would be sinning according to the spirit of the Mosaic laws [see Deuteronomy 22:1-4]. However, there is little in the SE literature to connect it directly with the idea of natural causes.

We can see that SE shares many similarities with the biblical understanding of the aetiology of poverty, and at this point is perhaps the closest to the crux of the biblical message. The following section will address a more recent addition to the literature: 'Participatory Methods' [pioneered by Robert Chambers in the early 1990s]. This approach has arisen in response to the three previous methods, which are often seen as dominated by the voices of professionals and others who are similarly disconnected from the centre of poverty. It aims to include a greater diversity of people in the discussion of what it means to be poor, the effect of poverty and the appropriate action to take.

3.5 Participatory Methods

At last those above will hear us. Before now, no one ever asked us what we think.

— Poor men, Guatemala 1994a as presented in Narayan et al. (2000 p. 14)

The fourth approach that we will explore, 'participatory methods', is seen by Chambers [1932-] as 'a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act' (Chambers, 1994 p. 953). As evident in our Guatemalan example, this approach is centred on the individual concerned and giving them voice. The key difference between participatory and conventional methodologies lies in the location of the power in the research process (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995 p. 1667). It recognizes poor men and women as the most important stakeholders in the poverty conversation, and thus seeks to engage with, emphasize and learn from, the lives of poor people and their perspective of their own reality.

3.5.a Background

This style was seen to evolve from the late 1970s, and begin to gain significance in the late 1980s and early 1990s and has been motivated by the desire to move from top-down, technocratic and economic interventions towards bottom-up, community interventions. Chambers, an academic and development practitioner based in the United Kingdom, has been seen as a particularly influential

voice in this discourse. Chambers expresses regret that many professionals in the poverty debate have an understanding that is, as he puts it, 'universal, reductionist, standardized and stable', whilst in his eyes the realities of poor people are essentially 'local, complex, diverse and dynamic' (Chambers, 1995 p. 173). Whilst the importance of income and employment is appreciated, additional dimensions such as social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonal deprivation, powerlessness and humiliation are of deep significance to those experiencing such disadvantage.

In his instrumental piece titled *Poverty and livelihood: whose reality counts?* (Chambers, 1995) Chambers confronts the understanding of income-poverty [as seen in the MA] that has been so influential across the last century – an influence, he says, that is largely derived from four realities. Firstly, it is economists who favour quantitative concepts, measures and methods, who have long been the dominant voice in the development conversation. Secondly, it is the voice from the industrial North [where cash income is the understood proxy for well-being] that directs policy-making. Thirdly, there is the [mis]understanding that poverty is explicit, objective and measurable, and that intangible items can be measured and given a monetary value. Finally, Chambers notes the presupposition that the worse-off people are, the more emphasis needs to be placed on economics [only when absolute poverty is dealt with can a broader understanding of development be embraced]. Whilst there is undeniable logic behind this reasoning, he argues that the MA must be seen as only one dimension of poverty: one that 'serves the needs of the professionals in the cores of power rather than emerging from the realities of the poor...' (Chambers, 1995 p. 182).

Chambers strongly argues that between professionals and poor people, it is the reality of the latter that is of fundamental importance in the poverty debate. Despite their good intentions, he contends that any non-poor person trying to make pronouncements on what matters to the poor will never be able to do so without being impaired to some degree by their own experiences, conditioning and personal biases. If it is the reality of the poor that is of the most importance, then it is the voice of the poor that must be given the most prominence. In this way, the strength of PM lies in its perceived ability to overcome a major limitation recognized in the prior three methods: the issue of objectivity.

Four critical elements of this new method have been offered:

- i. Analysis and action delivered by local people, especially the poor.
- ii. A greater emphasis on sustainable livelihoods [over generic 'employment'].
- iii. The decentralization, democratization and diversification of ownership and accountability.
- iv. A commitment to professional and personal change by those concerned with development practices.

(source: adapted from Chambers, 1995 p. 174)

These four points will now be discussed, allowing for interludes from alternate commentators. The central tenet of the first point is the 'basic human right of poor people to conduct their own analysis' (Chambers, 1995 p. 201). In order to achieve this, various methodologies have been developed. Two of the most prominent will be discussed here. Rapid Rural Appraisals [RRAs] began to emerge in the late 1970s, with the Institute of Development at the University of Sussex thought to be an initial hub of innovation (Chambers, 1994 p. 956). Though not explicitly the first form of participatory research, they are seen as being a significant development on earlier methods. Their key goal was to use the knowledge of local people in order to build understanding. Participatory Rural Appraisal [PRAs] followed in the late 1980s/1990s, largely developed by NGOs. They sought to engage not only the knowledge of the local community, but also their analytical capabilities. They aimed to move from an 'extractive' model [as in the RRA] towards an 'empowering' model. Whilst the information gained in an RRA was for the benefit of the researcher, in a PRA it was to be owned by the local community.

In support of Chamber's first point, Narayan et al. (2000) have joined the conversation by exploring the manner in which such analysis can be encouraged. They comment that a key feature must focus on open-ended discourse, such as unstructured interviews and discussion groups. The goal is that the issues and dimensions of poverty that are significant to the group [rather than those significant to the researcher] will emerge and shape the enquiry. Additionally, the researcher hopes that the active involvement of poor people as 'respondents' – rather than 'subjects' – will lead to authenticity, empowerment and self-directed follow-up action. The respondents themselves should be involved in the development, delivery, analysis and interpretation of these questions. In itself, this requires a substantial commitment on behalf of the researchers to recognize themselves as external facilitators, prepared to substitute the role of 'expert' for the role of 'learner', and willing to be involved in the lives of their respondents for an extended time.

Returning to the four points raised on p. 144, we see that 'sustainable livelihoods' is the second key concern. He raises what might be understood as the 'economic paradox', by supposing that many measures aimed at raising economic growth may actually destroy livelihoods, whilst livelihoods may be supported in many ways that do not raise economic growth. Policies must, he argues, always maintain the sanctity of livelihood and thus should encourage sustainable livelihoods over economic growth. In practice, a pro-livelihood stance would first and foremost include policies aimed at securing rights to the ownership and access to land, water and resources, the removal of detrimental restrictions and prohibitions, and providing efficient and effective health services, as these are seen as essential features of sustainable livelihoods (Chambers, 1995 p. 202).

A commitment to the third point, 'the three Ds' [decentralization, democracy and diversity] would see a shift of ownership and accountability over development programmes from the 'top' [professionals and policy-makers] to the 'bottom' [those affected by poverty]. According to Chambers, the principle of subsidiarity should be at play:

... Every activity should be carried out as low down as feasible... participation at the community or group level is then not "their" participation in "our" programme but our participation in theirs... professionals are responsible to their clients: health workers to the sick, agricultural researchers and extensionists to farmers, NGO workers and officials [whether national or foreign, local or central] to poor villagers, slum dwellers and others... who might be touched by their decisions and actions (Chambers, 1995 pp. 202-203).

To achieve this, Chambers' fourth point advocates a professional and personal change in approach to the work of development studies. The 'powerful' and 'influential' must be prepared to learn from the poor, unhurriedly and without agenda. Agencies must allow opportunities for staff to learn directly from, and with, poor people and then act in a manner that is reflective of their reality.

Narayan, Patel et al. have contributed to this final point. In a vast analysis on the use of Participatory Poverty Assessments [defined as as an 'instrument for including poor people's views in the analysis of poverty and the formulation of strategies to reduce it through public policy' (Norton, 2001 p. 6)] by the World Bank, they determined four specific questions that need to be considered in the development of the participatory research tools:

- i. How do poor people understand and define poverty [experiences, adjustments for gender, class ethnicity]?
- ii. What is the role of formal and informal institutions in the lives of poor people [effectiveness, quality, accessibility, psychological impact]?
- iii. How do gender relations within the household affect how poverty is experienced?
- iv. What is the relationship between poverty and social fragmentation [social cohesion and social exclusion]?

(source: Narayan et al., 2000 p. 17)

Through the use of open-ended questions such as these, it is hoped that the 'powerful' would indeed learn from the 'powerless', increasing their understanding and acceptance of their reality. It would seem that PM could meaningfully complement and contribute to the common understandings of poverty. By giving the poor greater voice, they are acknowledged as an authority on their life, with knowledge that should be respected. They are given greater control over the research process, and subsequently over the outcomes of the research process. Nevertheless, it is not without its limitations, which shall be addressed in the following section.

3.5.b Assumptions and limitations with participatory methods

The greatest strength of PM is usually seen in how it addresses the issue of objectivity. However, further examination raises doubts. Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 25) are uncertain that respondent involvement is as high as often claimed, suggesting that it is still 'nearly always outsiders who conduct the assessments and interpret the results.' Dodson and Schmalzbauer (2005 p. 957) further this notion, implying that the goal of coproducing knowledge in the participatory manner may be overwhelmed by the pressure placed upon researchers to produce 'theoretically sound, practical, and policy-oriented results.' Regrettably, the developing community may still often be seen as data producers for the researchers, rather than thinkers and independent agents for change.

Even when taking researcher involvement into consideration, Hagenaars and de Vos (1988), Laderchi (2001), Laderchi et al. (2003) and Dodson and Schmalzbauer (2005) all still express concerns regarding the accuracy of the information reported by the respondents. Firstly, the self-reporting of one's condition is wholly subjective. One person's understanding of terms such as

'sufficient' and 'insufficient' may vary widely from another's, and there is very little opportunity to compare assessments without quantitative evidence. Varying social conditioning and educational levels between individuals can further exacerbate this concern. Differing – and rising – expectations of social norms must also be taken into account: one generation's acceptance of a standard of living may contrast another's, even within the same community. Careful attention must be paid to this limitation, particularly when using results to inform economic investment in specific projects.

The work of Dodson and Schmalzbauer (2005) varies slightly in that it focuses on poor and marginalized communities in a highly-developed country [the United States], yet their findings regarding the accuracy of self-reporting are still important. They found that gaining accurate information could prove challenging as vulnerable people may withhold knowledge as a conscious act of self-protection: they are highly conscious of stigmatization, regulatory scrutiny and abuse, and reprisal from punitive authorities [including the loss of welfare aid]. In many cases, this may result in an attitude of 'just tell them what they want to hear' (p. 951).

Conversely, Laderchi (2001) and Ravallion (2012) both raise the issue of inaccuracy caused by respondent ignorance: one study in Europe has reported that as much as 20 per cent of respondents vary their answers on job satisfaction when asked twice within the same interview, whilst another found that when respondents completed a 'satisfaction with life survey' twice in two weeks, the serial correlation coefficient was only 0.6 (both cited in Ravallion, 2012 p. 15). Ravallion also proposes the possibility of 'frame-of-reference-bias', where a participant living in a poor village who has little experience with larger cities may actually rate their subjective welfare higher than an economically wealthier person who has access to more affluent people through their city or the media (2012 p. 22).

Prominent US-based economists Esther Duflo [Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and Abhijit V. Banerjee [also of MIT] offer a similar precaution. Though understanding that the poor and non-poor share similar desires and weaknesses, and that all have a desire to act rationally to create a better future, they provide a caveat to those using a participatory approach. Their concern lies primarily with the poor's access to sufficient and accurate information, and their subsequent ability to interpret the information and make reasonable decisions: the difficulty of 'making decisions about things that come with a lot of

small print when you cannot even properly read the large print' (Duflo and Banerjee, 2011 p. ix). On the basis of their research, the authors concluded that the philosophy of the participatory approach is best coupled with a willingness of the researcher to provide accurate information, tools and options from which the participants might benefit (see also Banerjee et al., 2010).

Though it would seemingly violate the fundamental principles of PM, we should therefore at least consider that not every respondent would have a consistent view of their circumstances, an appropriate knowledge of their local environment, and the ability to effectively communicate their views during the research process. Explorations that do not consider the possibility that people will [consciously or unconsciously] provide misinformation may be flawed.

It is of use to recognize that the goals of PM may also differ according to the implementer, the respondents and the context. Cornwall (2000 p. 70) identified three forms in which PM are employed:

- i. Those associated with self-determination and empowerment.
- ii. Those associated with increasing the efficiency of the programmes.
- iii. Those emphasizing mutual learning.

However, it has been suggested (see Laderchi et al., 2003) that a substantial number of development programmes have placed an over-emphasis on form 2, i.e. adopting a participatory approach primarily so that the poor would cooperate with programmes and increase the programme's efficiency. It would seem that the strength of PM – its qualitative, subjective nature – is also regarded as a weakness in circles attempting to deliver quantitative, economically-based outcomes. Despite proclaimed intentions, initiatives that actually led to an increase in self-determination and empowerment have been difficult to find. When such initiatives were found, they have been described as 'simply window dressing' – a phrase agreed upon in a 2001 meeting of 39 organizations and regional networks in 15 African countries (as cited in Laderchi et al., 2003 p. 25).

There remains another aspect of PM that is simultaneously an asset and a limitation. Whilst many other conventional approaches use either individuals or households as the unit for analysis, PM has the option of grouping similar social sets, such as men and women. By partitioning populations

into groups based upon the commonalities of gender, ethnicity and so forth, it is argued that PM has a more insightful view into the social dynamics of the community. This allows the researcher to better observe the social structures, power dynamics and relational interplay that occurs between social groupings, and is seen by Narayan et al. (2000 p. 17) as a significant strength.

However, problems may be encountered when conflicting viewpoints arise. In this situation, Laderchi, Saith et al. ask, 'whose voices are being heard?' (2003 p. 25). In communities where there is a strong existing power imbalance, it may be true that the dominant majority's voice will be presented more forcefully than the voices of minorities, particularly if the minorities are fearful of being seen as oppositionists. This hindrance may be proliferated in communities of severe social exclusion, where some members of society are pushed beyond the limits of acceptable human community – some to the point of being considered sub-human. In these extreme scenarios, the voices of those at the very lowest of society's structure may never be considered, and thus existing fractured social relations are reinforced. The importance of careful sample selection and triangulation can help address, if not eliminate, this limitation.

Aggregating the results of a PM inquiry presents another issue to the researcher. If an end goal of the research is to inform decisions that will lead to actions that ultimately benefit the group, there will at some point be a need to establish a ranking of importance. When this occurs, Laderchi (2001) suggests that the researchers may need to either aggregate individual preferences or establish a hierarchy of preferences. Either way, decisions must be made that will inevitably require comparisons to be made on interpersonal well-being. This raises issues of who has the right to determine the method of aggregation; we are again faced with similar epistemological questions that we encountered at the outset of engaging with PM.

Finally, on a practical level, PM can be resource intensive. In both developed (Dodson and Schmalzbauer, 2005) and developing (Narayan et al., 2000) countries, the process of engaging with respondents effectively has been found to be time-consuming, expensive and personally demanding. Given their demands upon a respondent, researchers should consider themselves ethically obligated to provide a 'serious, long-term commitment to the people who give their time and information' to assist the researcher (Narayan et al., 2000 p. 16). However, given that the

participatory researcher seeks to empower his or her respondents, this expectation of personal involvement and duty should not be entirely unexpected.

3.5.c Participatory methods in practice

Unsurprisingly, when PM are used to increase knowledge on poverty, we find that Chambers was somewhat accurate in describing poverty as 'local, complex, diverse and dynamic'. The most notable observation is that poverty is anything but uniform: it could be argued that there is more diversity amongst the poor than the non-poor (Chambers, 1994 p. 188). In order to properly appreciate this diversity, we have tabulated the results of two prominent researcher groups under the one heading [where PPA is the acronym for 'Participatory Poverty Assessment']. The results are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Dimensions of poverty [PM]

Author	Chambers (1995)	Narayan et al. (2000) ⁴⁷
Context	Summary of World Bank PPAs conducted in Ghana, Zambia, and Kenya.	Summary of World Bank PPAs from 47 countries.
Dimensions	Poverty	Material insufficiency
	Assets	Food
	Income	Employment
	Social inferiority	Psychological ill-health
	Isolation	Powerlessness
	Geographical	Voicelessness
	Informational	Cultural norms
	Physical weakness	Failing infrastructure
	Vulnerability	Insufficient assets
	Seasonality	Physical/human/social capital
	Powerlessness	Environmental shock or decline
	Humiliation	Vulnerability

The identification of these dimensions could prove to be a significant contribution to the field of development. By attempting to offer definitions from the position of the poor, PM could provide a solution to a major limitation in the three approaches discussed previously: objectivity. Laderchi et al. (2003 p. 26) suggest that these dimensions might help lead to defining an appropriate 'basket of commodities' for the MA, a list of basic capabilities in the CA, and the composite elements of segregation in the SE approach.

⁴⁷ Rephrased here in the negative sense.

At times, researchers have also endeavoured to use subjective participatory methods to support/refute the more traditional objective measures. Laderchi sees value in using PM interactively with non-participatory methods. When used complementarily, one method could be used to inform, explain, confirm, refute or enrich the information gathered by the other (Laderchi, 2001 p. 14), as we will explore now.

Recently, Ravallion (2012) has offered one such attempt. He suggests that the tools used should include both a qualitative question [based on subjective welfare] and a quantitative question [based on economic welfare] (p. 7). As an example, he recommends that Question 1 would ask a respondent to indicate their position on some form of scale, or ladder, according to a specific metric. The 'satisfaction with life' survey provides a common option: 'Overall, how satisfied [content, happy] are you with your life? Are you: [1] very unsatisfied; [2] unsatisfied; [3] neither unsatisfied nor satisfied; [4] satisfied; [5] very satisfied'. The second option asks the respondent to identify a level of income that they would rate as sufficient for their circumstances. The 'minimal income question' [MIQ] is an illustration: 'What income level do you personally consider to be absolutely minimal? That is to say that with less you could not make ends meet.' (Ravallion, 2012 p. 7). Ravallion proposes that outcomes from both of these lines of query can help the researcher in a number of ways. Firstly, the results can be overlaid on existing objective [income-based] poverty lines to test their relevance to the poor community. Secondly, the results can be used to create a composite, subjective welfare index – or even a new poverty line – which shows the assumed critical income level at which acceptable subjective welfare is reached.

Though not strictly a PPA, the results are interesting nevertheless and in many ways help us interpret findings from earlier sections. Ravallion assimilated his 2012 findings with some of his earlier work, and in doing so came to some significant conclusions:

- 'Satisfaction with Life' seemingly increases with consumption, reinforcing the supposed correlation between income and well-being.
- At lower-monetary levels, people are more concerned with access to their own 'basket of necessities', and less concerned with their status amongst others.

- At higher-monetary levels, poverty was seen more relatively, suggesting the existence of a 'hedonic treadmill' (p. 14) on which higher actual income does not result in higher happiness.

(source: Ravallion, 2012 pp. 14-15)

Attempts at using PM on a large scale have often provided interesting results. Using the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey, Ravallion and Lokshin (2002) sampled 2870 households and 6256 individuals between 1994 and 1996. The survey was designed to collect both objective income/expenditure data and subjective welfare data simultaneously – thought to be the first such wide-scale survey of its kind in Russia (p. 1456). As an objective welfare indicator, the 'welfare ratio' was used: total household income as a proportion of the [established Russian] poverty line. The subjective question was as follows:

Please imagine a 9-step ladder where on the bottom, the first step, stand the poorest people, and the highest step, the ninth, stand the rich. On which step are you today?
(Ravallion and Lokshin, 2002 p. 1456)

In many ways, Ravallion and Lokshin's results affirmed the reasonably obvious correlation between self-rated economic welfare and objective poverty lines. Respondents with higher family income per person were unlikely to place themselves on the lower rungs of the poor-rich ladder. However, they found a number of idiosyncrasies within the data: 60 per cent of the [income] poorest eighth did not place themselves on the lowest two rungs of the subjective ladder, and high income families were very reticent to place themselves on the highest two rungs of the ladder [the fifth rung of the ladder was the most common rung for the richest 2 per cent of respondents]. It would seem that neither the poor nor the rich actually identify themselves as such, relatively speaking. Intriguingly, the authors highlight a number of other factors to influence subjective views more than income. Healthier and better-educated adults perceive themselves as higher on the ladder [even when researchers controlled for income], whilst the unemployed place themselves lower on the ladder, despite full income replacement. Living in a rich area lowers one's perception, as do feelings of social exclusion [manifested here in the belief that the government does not care for them].

Though they concur their data is somewhat restricted by the natural limitations of the participatory approach (p. 1471) Ravallion and Lokshin support the role of this form of research, particularly

when used to critique the more traditional objective methods. Its value, in their eyes, is as a supplement to conventional surveys rather than a substitute.

3.5.d The causes of poverty according to participatory methods

We have seen that, in the words of participatory respondents, the dimensions of poverty are vast and varied. We should not be surprised then if the causes of poverty are seen to be complex as well. In 1979, Townsend presented results from his British research on subjective deprivation measures. Townsend looked at poverty from a perspective of blame: when people ['chief wage-earners or heads of household'] were asked whom or what should be apportioned blame for poverty, he found the top three responses to be:

- Of those who had never experienced poverty themselves, 44 per cent blamed the poor themselves, 32 per cent blamed multiple factors [individuals, government, education, industry] and 9 per cent blamed the government.
- Of those who had sometimes experienced poverty themselves, 38 per cent blamed the poor themselves, 36 per cent blamed multiple factors and 14 per cent blamed the government.
- Of those who experienced poverty all the time, 33 per cent blamed multiple factors, 30 per cent blamed the poor themselves and 22 per cent blamed the government.

(source: adapted from Townsend, 1979 p. 429)

We can see here, in British society at least, the ease in which people blame poor people for their own poverty. Though more marked amongst those who had never been poor, it still remains a high factor amongst the poor themselves. In expanding what was meant when blame was apportioned to the poor themselves, Townsend comments that it was a mixture of 'ill-luck, indolence and mismanagement' (1979 p. 429).

Seventeen years after Townsend's findings, Wilson published findings from a similarly themed study in Baltimore, Maryland (Wilson, 1996). He set out to explore the beliefs on the causes of poverty for three types of people: welfare dependents, the homeless and migrant labourers. This study is of particular interest, as it raised the issue of different types of poverty, and consequently the possibility for different triggers for each type [Wilson contends that many previous studies had

grouped all impoverished people under one generic label, 'poor', thus restricting the possibility for multiple causal factors]. His findings indicated that his respondents predominantly viewed individualistic determinants [lifestyle choice, ability and talent, morals and drunkenness, lack of effort] to be the cause of poverty in welfare dependents, but structural determinants [low wages, exploitation, no jobs, bad schools] were seen to be the cause of poverty in the homeless community. For the poverty of migrant labourer, individual and structural determinants were virtually identical (Wilson, 1996 p. 419).

An additional important finding by Wilson was the suggestion that beliefs about the causes of poverty are less influenced by the respondent's own social status, and more dependent on their exposure to the poor. Being approached by a poor person seeking money, or engaging in informal discussions about the poor, are likely to result in individualistic beliefs: involvement in friendships with the poor and hearing the opinions of 'experts' are likely to result in structural beliefs (Wilson, 1996 p. 422). We acknowledge that this particular study is not completely representative of PM, as in many instances those surveyed were not those experiencing poverty. However, they provide the opportunity to learn from the 'non-experts', and for this reason they may prove to be valuable.

It is important to note that these studies were conducted in developed countries, which we have seen may have a more relative understanding of poverty. We will now turn our attention to wide-scale and thought-provoking research by Krishna (Krishna, 2006, Krishna, 2007a, Krishna, 2007b, Krishna et al., 2004), who conducted 'community-based enquiries' in villages of India [Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra], Peru [Puno and Cajamarca], western Kenya and central/western Uganda. In his studies, respondents from the local community were asked to share their experience [or what they had observed of others] of moving into, or out of, poverty over a 25-year period. Importantly, even the concept of 'poverty' was left open to community definition, as the researchers imposed no predefined understanding. The goal was to identify the 'pathways' into and out of poverty, from the perspective of the affected communities. As has been recognized already, no single cause of poverty was deemed entirely responsible for people's deprivation, but common themes can be identified, as shown in Table 3 (source: Krishna, 2007a p. 1953):

Table 3: Principal reasons for descent into poverty [% of descending households]

Reasons	Rajasthan, India <i>n</i> = 364	Gujarat, India <i>n</i> = 189	Western Kenya <i>n</i> = 172	Andhra, India <i>n</i> = 335	Uganda, Central / Western <i>n</i> = 202	Peru, Puno and Cajamarca <i>n</i> = 252
Poor health / health-related expenses	60	88	74	74	71	67
Marriage/dowry/new household expenses	31	68		69	18	29
Funeral-related expenses	34	49	64	28	15	11
High interest private debt	72	52		60	19	11
Drought/irrigation failure/crop disease	18			44	8	
Unproductive land / land exhaustion			38			

Poor health and health-related expenses are seen as the most prominent cause of a descent into poverty, though it is reiterated that factors typically cascade into one another. Ill-health is thought to have such notoriety as it happens to strike a double blow: in addition to reducing earning capacity it also increases healthcare expenditure. Individual factors, such as drunkenness and laziness, were found to be relatively insignificant, being associated with less than 5 per cent of the respondents.

A final valuable lesson is available from a study of 207 households [of both developed and less-developed communities] in the Fars province of Iran (Hayati and Karami, 2005). Using RRA methods, the researchers encouraged respondents to share their understandings of the causes of poverty in their areas. Explanations were carefully recorded and were analysed and classified by content analysis method. Their results showed that more than 50 per cent of respondents have structural attitudes towards the causes of poverty, whilst around 30 per cent held individualistic beliefs and the remaining 20 per cent assumed a fatalistic mind-set (p. 898). However, here lies the value: the authors found that those who held individualistic beliefs had a higher quality of life, better well-being according to self-perception, used insurance facilities more, and had more favourable production tendencies than the other two groups. The farmers with a fatalistic attitude were the poorest, whereas those with a structural attitude stood in between the two groups. Whilst the authors could not elaborate on the existence of a cause-and-effect relationship here [does attitude affect socio-economic position, or does socio-economic position affect attitude?], it would be of

benefit for participatory researchers to be reminded just how interweaved social conditions and respondent answers might be.

3.5.e Summary and Critique

PM has been seen to richly contribute to our understanding of poverty causation. It confronts the issue of objectivity by placing the right to define poverty in the hands of the impoverished, and it aims to overturn the prevalent mind-set that the “poor” are involved in “our” programmes, in favour of “us” participating in “theirs”. When this has happened, we have learnt, as Chambers relayed, poverty is indeed ‘local, complex, diverse and dynamic’. Poverty concern lies in multiple spheres that extend beyond monetary resources [though important], and into powerlessness, isolation and vulnerability, and is often caused by ill-health or excessive financial burdens.

There are a number of interesting connections between PM and a biblical anthropology. We have argued in section 2.5.a that the vast majority of biblical authorship would have been from people who had little personal experience with poverty. There is also very little evidence to show that the biblical authors were consciously interested in listening to the poor or giving them a voice: in what could be seen as either righteousness or paternalism, the writer of Proverbs encourages his readers to speak up on behalf of the poor and vulnerable [Proverbs 31:8-10], yet there is no such encouragement to actually listen to their voice. Townsend’s findings (Townsend, 1979), whereby those who had never experienced poverty were more likely to attribute poverty to the choices and attitudes of the poor themselves, are reasonably reminiscent of the proverbial writing, which is also quick to blame to the poor for their circumstances. Wilson’s research (Wilson, 1996), which found that those who develop friendships with the poor are more likely to eschew individualistic guilt is a reminder that a sense of solidarity with the poor helps the rich see another side of their story. Perhaps this why the Mosaic codes so frequently refer to the poor as ‘your brother’. Here, we are reminded of Job who, following the tirade of “wisdom” from his 3 friends, pleaded with them to listen to his viewpoint [Job 21:2]. For him, their answers did not address his reality, and the greatest consolation they could give him was to simply hear his story. To him, their opinions were nothing but falsehood [21:34].

Finally, it is important to recognize that PM is the only approach that so readily lists some form of natural cause as a direct reason for poverty [see Table 3]. As with the Egyptian and the Bethlehem

famine narratives, drought, irrigation breakdown and crop failure were cited by Krishna's respondents as an identifiable cause of poverty, particularly in regions heavily dependent on an agricultural economy.

In many ways, PM reinforce aspects of our previous approaches. It features the significance of economic resources [as per the MA], though as part of a greater concern. It highlights what people can do, rather than what they are incapable of doing [as per the CA], and it stresses the impact of fractured social relationships with those considered to be in power [as per SE]. Once we have taken the practical concerns into consideration, we largely accept PM as a fundamentally important voice in the poverty conversation. We see it playing a reasonably weighty role as our argument develops further.

3.6 Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, we sought to engage with the second research question: 'According to leading contemporary, secular scholarship, what is the aetiology of poverty?' As such, we considered four different approaches to understanding poverty: the MA, CA, SE and PM. While this conceptual literature may firstly be concerned with concepts of poverty, more than causes of poverty, we have seen that with some investigation the central issues of aetiology are readily apparent.

At its core, we have found that the aetiology of poverty according to the MA is a lack of assets; therefore raising the productivity of a society is understood to invariably raise its members' income levels and reduce poverty. The aetiology of poverty according to the CA is the lack of opportunity that citizens have to trade their capabilities for the functionings of their choice. Both the MA and the CA are largely interested in the individual, paying little heed to the relational aspects of communities [and thus tend to be more absolutist], and their adoption is seen to be more appropriate in developing countries. For SE, the aetiology of poverty is concerned with relative power dynamics and how one group's power and wealth may, directly or indirectly, lead to another group's poverty. Lastly, we see from PM that the aetiology of poverty is varied according to the voice being heard: material insufficiency, social inferiority, powerlessness and vulnerability, inadequate infrastructure, isolation, unemployment, ill-health, expense burdens and agricultural failure are among the leading issues raised [in many ways, PM could be seen as a summary of the previous three approaches].

The result is that we have very little consensus among leading, contemporary, secular scholarship on the reason for poverty. However, we refrain at this point from concluding that their views are contradictory, opposed to one another, or incompatible; perhaps we should expect it.⁴⁸ It may be the case that their perspectives and results are complementary and compatible within a larger framework. This larger framework could be Wright's model, which will now be compared against the data from the Brazilian participatory survey. Following this assessment in Chapter 4, we will triangulate our findings from the three sources [biblical, secular theoretical and participatory data], forming a critical synthesis that will ultimately answer our primary research question.

⁴⁸ Christian Smith, agrees, when he states that 'different views of human personhood will provide us with different scientific interests, different professional moral and ethical sensibilities, different theoretical paradigms of explanation, and, ultimately, different visions of what comprises a good human existence...'. See SMITH, C. 2011. What is a person? *In*: DREHER, R. (ed.). <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2011/05/what-is-a-person>: First Things.

CHAPTER 4 TESTING WRIGHT'S MODEL

We have come to the point of addressing the third of our key questions, namely 'According to sample participatory data, what is the aetiology of poverty?' In this chapter, we will conduct a Framework Synthesis using the data available from Melo (1999) with the view to connect and comment on Wright's assertions. However, as first stated on p. 20, we recognize that our research should best be seen as providing theoretical inferences, comparisons and linkages between our studied population [the Brazilian sample] and a general theory [Wright's model]. We are not endeavouring to provide a statistical generalization from our chosen population to all other populations, but to see if Wright's model, at a minimum, connects with the experiences of our chosen sample.

The established process (see Carroll et al., 2013 p. 12) for conducting a Framework Synthesis has been presented earlier on p. 26. Our adaption for the purposes of our study is shown in Table 4. Each step of the process will be addressed as this chapter progresses.

Table 4: Our Framework Synthesis process

'In the opinions of those experiencing poverty, what are the leading causes of their situation?'	
Selecting Wright's model of Tri-Causation.	Systematically identify relevant primary research studies with qualitative, participatory approach data, using the SPIDER approach.
Generate an <i>a priori</i> framework taking into consideration themes observed.	Extract data on study characteristics and appraise quality.
Gather evidence from studies and code against the framework.	
Look for signs of new themes that do not fit in the framework.	
Produce an updated framework by merging the <i>a priori</i> and any new themes that have been observed.	
Review evidence against new framework. Explore any issues that have arisen, discuss implications and comment on quality of studies.	

4.1 Selecting the Framework and Themes

4.1.a Framework

Carroll et al. (2013 p. 2) suggest a method of identifying relevant models and theories by using what they have titled the 'BeHEMoTh' approach, which is a mnemonic consisting of four components: Behaviour of interest, Health context, Exclusions, and Models or Theories [we have provided a rationale for using this method on p. 23]. The purpose of the BeHEmoTh approach is to 'systematically identify relevant models and theories' for use within the framework (Carroll et al., 2013 p. 4). Though their background is health, we see no compelling reason why this model cannot be translated into the poverty discussion. For us, this means we were searching for the following terms:

- **Behaviour of interest:** causes of poverty.
- **(Health) Context:** universal – developed and developing areas.
- **Exclusions:** None, though a multidimensional perspective is desired.
- **Models or Theories:** Model or theory or framework or concept.

This type of approach is actually not new to us. We began our thesis by stating that we were interested in exploring the common definitions, features and causes of poverty. We noted that the issue of poverty, whilst typically envisaged in developing regions, is also a feature of developed regions [and even the terms 'developed' and 'developing' are fuzzy]. We therefore sought relevant models and theories that would suitably address this topic from a universal perspective. Though we saw that Laderchi et al. (2003) had already provided an introduction to four such models – MA, CA, SE and PM – we sought a model that was biblically-sourced, and we decided Wright's model from the Old Testament (Wright, 2004) would be a useful inclusion. Thus our model for the synthesis is what we have titled Wright's Model of Tri-Causation [see Figure 2, p. 168].

4.1.b Themes

The result of the research of Chapter 2 was the generation of an *a priori* framework for understanding the causes of poverty, drawing directly upon Wright's model. Thus, the main proposition of this *a priori* framework is that the causes of poverty are:

- *Natural causes:* the result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason.

- *Laziness*: laziness and squandering that leads to impoverishment.
- *Oppression*: exploitation by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor

[And/or the interplay between the three.]

Our data will thus be reduced to its core theme and subthemes and coded against this framework [see Table 5]. Any matching data will be coded accordingly, and any discrepancies will be individually interpreted and coded according to a new, relevant theme as appropriate.

Table 5: The coding framework

QUESTION	THEME	DEFINITION	SUBTHEMES ⁴⁹
<i>'In the opinions of those experiencing poverty, what are the leading causes of their situation?'</i>	Natural Causes	The result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason.	None.
	Laziness	Laziness and squandering that leads to impoverishment.	None.
	Oppression	Exploitation by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor	Social Exploitation Economic Exploitation Ethnic Exploitation Governing Corruption ⁵⁰ Judicial Corruption

4.2 Selecting the Primary Data

Having confidence in the search strategy used to identify relevant primary data sources is paramount. Carroll et al. (2013 p. 4) suggest a method of identifying relevant primary qualitative research studies by using what they have titled the 'SPIDER' approach: Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation and Research type [we have provided a rationale for using this method on p. 27]. 'Sample' consists of the size and make-up of the focus group, and recognizes that smaller groups of participants tend to be used in qualitative research. 'Phenomenon of Interest' specifies the behaviours, decisions or experiences that are of concern to our research. 'Design' is centred on the way that the information was gathered, such as through the use of a questionnaire, survey, interview or focus group. 'Evaluation' is interested in the outcome of the research – did the results

⁴⁹ These subthemes are taken from Chapter 2.

⁵⁰ See 4.4.a Notes on coding.

include opinions, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, experiences etc.? Finally, 'Research type' would be qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods.

When we apply this method for our study, our strategy would include the following required terms:

- **Sample:** people experiencing poverty.
- **Phenomenon of Interest:** causes of poverty.
- **Design:** Questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, interviews.
- **Evaluation:** Beliefs, perceptions, understandings.
- **Research type:** qualitative.

This process, when used in the field by Cooke et al. (2012) and Carroll et al. (2013) was designed specifically to prepare search terms for use on popular databases in order to limit the scope of the results. A similar approach was used in our project, though our search was conducted via online search engines such as Google and Google Scholar. After much searching, one particular source of data was found to be the most relevant and appropriate for our study: a compilation effort designed to inform the *World Development Report 2000/01: Attacking Poverty* (World Bank, 2000). This compilation study meets the requirements for our SPIDER search.

The following section will introduce the data source in three stages: from a macro to a micro viewpoint. First, we will introduce the World Development Reports and follow by introducing the annual report of interest: the World Development Report 2000/01. Thirdly, we will introduce the Brazil National Synthesis Report [one of the many studies that informed the 2000/01 report]. It is the Brazil report which provides the primary data for our study.

4.2.a The World Bank and the World Development Report

The *World Development Report* [WDR] is the World Bank's major analytical publication and the Bank's best-known contribution to knowledge about development. The report is written by a panel of Bank staff and external consultants, under the general guidance of the Chief Economist. The panel also produces background papers on the issues discussed in the report. As we prepare to use them as our key data source, it is important for us to understand the purpose, scope and validity of the reports.

The WDR has been produced annually since 1978. Robert McNamara, then president of the World Bank, put together the inaugural report with just 68 pages of text – a slim offering by today's standards. His purpose of the *WDR* was to provide 'a comprehensive assessment of the global development issues' (World Bank, 1978 p. iii). Each year since, the WDR has focused on a particular aspect of development selected by the Bank's president: previous years have included topics as diverse as *Prospects for growth and alleviation of poverty* [1978], *Agriculture and economic development* [1982], *Investing in health* [1993], *Making services work for poor people* [2004], *A better investment climate for everyone* [2005] and *Gender equality and development* [2012]. The forthcoming WDR [2016] is titled *The internet and development*. The 1990 report, *Poverty*, is renowned for making prominent the international dollar-a-day standard as the benchmark poverty line (see Deaton, 2009 p. 108). Increasingly, the WDR has utilized academic research from outside of the World Bank: not only from economics, but also increasingly from subjects including psychology, political science, epidemiology and sociology.

As its benchmark annual publication, the World Bank obviously holds the WDR in high regard. In his [academically peer-reviewed] review on the history of the report, Shahid Yusuf writes of the WDR: '...it has become a highly influential publication that is consulted by international organizations, national governments, scholars, and civil society networks to inform their decision-making processes' (Yusuf, 2009 p. i), though the influence and reach of the reports is admittedly difficult to quantify. In a 2006 measure to verify its influence, the World Bank commissioned a group of leading external academic economists – Banerjee, Angus Deaton of Princeton University and Ken Rogoff of Harvard University – to conduct an independent review of its most recent research.

The panel noted many of the strengths of the Bank's research:

The panel is enormously impressed by the best of the Bank's research. There is a great deal of work that meets the highest academic standards of originality and technique, and Bank work is frequently published in the top academic journals, such as the *American Economic Review* (21 papers over the review period, 10 of which are refereed research papers), the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (9 papers), the *Journal of Political Economy* (5), and the *Journal of Finance* (10), as well as in relevant field journals, particularly the *Journal of Development Economics* (60), and, where relevant, in a number of prominent non-economics journals (Banerjee et al., 2006 p. 46).

The panel also complimented the Bank's annual WDRs:

The breadth of the scholarship in the recent WDRs is impressive. Lessons are drawn from literatures well outside of economics, including epidemiology, medicine, education, politics, sociology, and anthropology, and people with knowledge of these fields are often brought into the team. In consequence, the WDRs are now much broader than they once were. Health and education have long been seen as central to reducing poverty and the Bank's knowledge and scholarship in these areas has increased over time (Banerjee et al., 2006 p. 79).

According to the group, the World Bank should rightfully be considered the world's premier development agency and is one of the most important and highest-funded research groups in development economics. They noted that as of 2006, it spent approximately two and a half per cent of its total budget on research and its research department, including 93 researchers and more than 30 support staff. It had '...by far the biggest single group of high-quality researchers in development economics' and is the '...single most important producer and collator of data about economic development' (Banerjee et al., 2006 p. 11).

The World Bank's ability to position itself as a leading and influential research unit may come down to the advantages it has over other organizations or research groups: it is able to work across borders and gather data that might not be readily available to individual researchers, it is able to fund research that may not receive an opportunity in the academic community and, as a policy-making organization, it seeks to produce research products that synthesize and draw out key lessons from the current body of original research (see Banerjee et al., 2006 pp. 14-18). Duflo concurs, writing that the World Bank research is at its peak when it does 'what no-one else has either the incentive or the means to do', such as assembling quantities of data beyond the reach of smaller research groups, investing extraordinary effort in developing new data collection tools that allow the collection of comparable data on new issues, and using its leverage with the member countries to enable research on specific programs of interest (see Banerjee et al., 2006 pp. 106-107).

However, this is not to say that the World Bank is without limitations in its research: it has numerous political, organizational and epistemic constraints that must be recognized by anyone involving themselves deeply with the Bank's research. Perhaps the most glaring limitation recognized by Banerjee et al. (2006) is that researchers are not in a position to follow their own intellectual whim. Researchers in the World Bank are designated their research requirements, which at times may

stem from a fad in academia or even within the Bank itself, leading to isolated projects that may have little impact on the wider research community.

The Bank's research has also been challenged for its inherent potential for bias. Researchers may at times be challenged not to publish and publicize results that go against the Bank's current priorities or may offend the Bank's major shareholders or affiliate governments: as Banerjee, Deaton et al. noted, there can be 'a tendency to pull political punches so that, for example, large, important countries are rarely criticized, even when the logic of the argument seems to lead in that direction', partly because – in the eyes of the panel – the WDRs 'suffer from always trying to make everyone happy' (Banerjee et al., 2006 pp. 81, 82). In a way, this criticism supports our decision for this study to use not just the Bank's published work [in the form of the WDR], but to seek the primary data gathered onsite, prior to its inclusion into – or exclusion from – the WDR.

4.2.b The World Development Report 2000/01: Attacking Poverty

The *World Development Report 2000/01: attacking poverty* (World Bank, 2000) was the first report in a decade to specifically focus on the issue of poverty, following the Bank's pattern of producing a WDR on poverty at the end of each decade: the 1980 report, *Poverty and human development*, and the 1990 report, *Poverty*, preceded the 2000/01 report. However, for reasons unknown, this pattern was not continued in the 2010 report, *Development and climate change*. The 2000/01 report is therefore the most recent publication of the Bank to provide data focused solely on the issue of poverty.

The WDR 2000/01 was specially commissioned to bring together a whole new body of evidence on poverty, seeking to 'expand the understanding of poverty and its causes' (p. v). In order to provide data for this report, a study was commissioned to 'enable a wide range of poor people in diverse countries and conditions to share their views in such a way that they can inform and contribute' to the report, based on their 'experiences, priorities, reflections, and recommendations' (p. 2).

The WDR 2000/01 used data from two sources: a synthesis of PPA reports titled *Voices of the poor: can anyone hear us?* (Narayan et al., 2000, hereafter titled 'Voices'), and a commissioned study titled *Consultations with the poor* (Narayan et al., 1999, hereafter titled 'Consultations'). The former was a review of recent participatory poverty reports conducted for the World Bank since 1993: 81

reports were selected [from an initial pool of over 300], representing data collected in 50 nations and involving about 40,000 poor people (see Narayan et al., 2000 pp. 3, 17). The latter was a new comparative study, specially commissioned for the WDR and comparing data from 23 countries and involving about 20,000 poor people (see Narayan et al., 1999 p. 1). It is the latter that is of most interest to us, as it comprises the national study that was specifically designed for a study such as ours.

According to *Consultations with the poor: methodology guide for the 20 country study for the World Development Report 2000/01* (Shah, 1999) that was distributed to the 20-country research team of *Consultations*, the purpose of the study was to 'enable a wide range of poor people in diverse countries and conditions to share their views in such a way that they can inform and contribute to the concepts and content of the *WDR 2000/01*' (Shah, 1999 p. 2, italics in original). The research design was firmly grounded in the open-ended tradition of participatory and qualitative research tools. This approach explicitly encouraged study teams to explore key issues that emerge by country, culture, social group, gender, age, occupation or other dimensions of difference of local importance.

The four major themes that were to be explored in the research, according to Shah (1999 pp. 7-8) were as follows:

- Exploring Well-being
- Priorities of the Poor
- Institutional Analysis
- Gender Relations

These guidelines insisted that the purpose of the research questions was to highlight any factors that were important to the poor themselves in order to provide a 'micro-level perspective of poor people's own experiences of poverty and responses to it' (p. 2).

The World Bank contends that the work of compiling the *Voices / Consultations* project was unique in two respects: it was the first large-scale comparative research effort using PM to focus on the voices of the poor, and it was also the first time that the WDR drew on participatory research in a

systematic fashion (Shah, 1999 preface). Thus the report was groundbreaking in gathering a wholly new body of evidence on understanding the causes and concepts of poverty. Findings from the country studies continue to be used at national levels, and the methodology developed by the study team continues to strongly influence research in this field. It is the ample depth of knowledge created in the study, and its position as a seminal research piece on multidimensional, participatory and qualitative poverty research, that underpins our choice in using its data as a primary source of information to test Wright's model.

Ultimately, the WDR 2000/01 reports that the causes of poverty according to their global research were [i] Lack of income and assets, [ii] Powerlessness, and [iii] Vulnerability (World Bank, 2000 p. 34). Conversely, they identified opportunity, empowerment, and security as the keys to alleviating poverty (World Bank, 2000 p. vii).

In general, the *Voices* project has been received favourably in the literature. The *Journal for International Development* stated that Narayan and the World Bank should be 'congratulated on this work' (Johnson, 2001 p. 377), and the *Institute for Asian Economic Affairs* awarded the volume a 'high rating' (Nogami, 2003 p. 394). Laderchi called the project 'the pinnacle of a sustained effort to adopt both standard monetary poverty assessments and participatory ones' (Laderchi, 2001 p. 15). However, in a public presentation at the Institute of Development Studies, Chambers [*Consultations* co-author] expressed a disappointment that a number of topics raised in *Voices* – such as the role of police, the importance of assets including the body, and the voice of the 'bottom poor' – was largely missing from the final WDR (Chambers, 2000). Other reviews, such as that by Hubbard (2001) are concerned more with the strategic implications that the report holds for the Bank, which is of little interest to our discussion.

4.2.c Consultations with the Poor: Brazil - National Synthesis Report

In 2013, we attempted to make contact with the lead researchers of each of the 23 countries studied in *Consultations*, as well as lead supervisor Deepa Narayan. Of all those available for contact, it was only Marcus Melo, the lead researcher of the Brazilian report, who was able to supply the primary data records used for his research. Numerous other countries responded with an interest to help, but regrettably their records were often not available digitally, not compiled in an accessible

format, or only available in a language other than English. Following a request on 23 May 2013, Marcus Melo graciously supplied the site reports from Brazil via email on 28 May 2013.

Therefore, the specific data set that will be analysed in this project will be the Participatory Poverty Assessment in Urban Brazil from 1999. The data from this research was compiled and presented in the report, *Consultations with the poor: Brazil - national synthesis report* (Melo, 1999), prior to its inclusion in the WDR 2000/01. The study was conducted in ten sites located in three Brazilian cities: Recife, Santo André and Itabuna. It involved discussions with 632 poor individuals who participated in discussion groups and/or individual interviews. As per the guidelines given to the researchers (Shah, 1999), the methodology employed was participatory and qualitative and was based on the view of poverty as multidimensional and not reducible to single-indicator economic measures of well-being. The data was amassed in a way as to allow people to communicate their views on their own understandings of poverty and responses from it. The analysis also sought to capture people's experience, and therefore it drew extensively on people's discourse.

The findings of the Brazilian report share similarities with the overall findings of the WDR, though the Brazilian researchers present tangible causes of poverty, whereas the WDR brings a more composite, conceptual picture. According to the Brazilian executive summary⁵¹ (Melo, 1999 p. 1):

People's perception of well-being showed significant variance across the groups and sites. It is possible, however, to identify a number of commonalities in the themes of well-being, quality of life, and living conditions. People tended to equate poverty with powerlessness and to relate well-being to security. Security is associated in the reports with a variety of factors including employment and steady income; access to food; good health and having access to health services, and also land tenure and homeownership.

Furthermore, Melo cites job dismissals, illnesses, deaths of parents, breakdown of marriages, and evictions from squatted land as the primary triggers of poverty (p. 1), concluding that 'unemployment is held to be the most important cause of poverty, followed by lack of schooling and sanitation' (p. 2). Importantly, he makes the observation that it is not just the event that determines the crisis, but the person's ability to cope with it. Unsurprisingly, families headed by women and the elderly are the least likely to be able to withstand such shocks.

⁵¹ Available in Appendix I.

4.3 Assessing the Data

According to Melo (1999 p. 5), the Brazil country study was prepared within the framework given in the *Consultations with the poor* (Shah, 1999) study project. Without unnecessarily repeating the process in its entirety, we will present the essentials according to the guide and its implementation in Brazil.

4.3.a Advantages and disadvantages of a secondary analysis

We recognize that conducting a secondary analysis has strengths and limitations, and these have been presented by Bryman (2012 pp. 312-316) and similarly by Boslaugh (2007 Chapter 1). Here, we will discuss the points that are most relevant to our project. The primary strength, which was of key concern to us, is the economy of cost and time. We have been able to access data at a fraction of the expense of gathering it ourselves. A secondary strength is the quality of the data: we believe it to be very high – perhaps much higher than we might have been able to collect, even if we had the time and resource. Finally, our secondary analysis opens the door for new and different interpretations of the data, particularly as we will be coming at it from an established framework. This means that we have the benefit of both knowing the primary researchers' conclusions, and being able to draw our own, newer conclusions from the data.

Conversely, we also recognize that there are disadvantages to a secondary analysis. We lack the familiarity with the data that the primary researchers have, and we must spend a substantial amount of time in the data to ensure that we have a confident and comfortable appreciation for the underpinning ideals, issues and variables represented. We accept that we have had no control over the quality of the data collected and to a degree we are dependent on the strengths and integrity of the primary researchers in following the methodological procedures given. Finally, we also concede that we had no control over the key variables or questions in the data, as the data was collected for another purpose. We have not had the opportunity to revise and refine the research process to suit our needs and must accept the data that is before us.

In his chapter on the specific analysis of qualitative data, Bryman (2012 p. 561) further notes the ethical issue deriving from the fact that the original researcher[s] may not have obtained the consent of research participants for the analysis of their data by a secondary researcher. We propose that this limitation is overcome as the original researcher has supplied the data with full knowledge of

the secondary research proposed and that full confidentiality will be given to the particulars of the participants involved.

Though the limitations are recognized, we maintain that the strengths of a secondary analysis - the economy of cost and time, and access to high quality data that would have been impossible to gather ourselves – ensure that this will be a worthwhile endeavour.

4.3.b Site selection and sampling

In 2015, Brazil is classified by the World Bank (see World Bank, 2015a) as an Upper Middle Income country with a Gross National Income [GNI] per capita of US \$11,690 [in 2013] and a poverty headcount ratio of 8.9% [in 2013], and is lauded along with Russia, India, China and South Africa as one of the BRICS nations – countries who are developing or newly-industrialized and who enjoyed large, fast-growing economies in the 2000s. However, at the turn of the century Brazil was still reeling from the 1980s “lost decade” of Latin American countries, and years of double-digit inflation. The 1980s and 1990s could only be described as unstable: hyperinflation and economic stagnation were peppered with years of high increases in annual GDP growth rates. Ultimately, according to Melo, this led to both an increase in absolute poverty and the impoverishment of the middle sectors: per capita income grew at an annual rate of 0.4% between 1981 and 1989 (Melo, 1999 p. 12). In 2001, Brazil’s GNI per capita was only US \$3,290 and 24.7% of Brazilians still lived under the national poverty line (World Bank, 2015b, World Bank, 2015c).

It was recommended that each country select at least 10 sites [a community or neighbourhood], which could be urban or rural depending on the nature of the country. It was recognized that achieving a truly representative sample would be problematic and that researchers should identify samples that would offer a diverse voice on poverty, reflecting the 2-3 most dominant poverty groups in the country. The research team were encouraged to find a cross-sample of people from within the community, such as poor men, poor women, poor youth, and people with disabilities (Shah, 1999 pp. 42-43).

In the Brazil report, 10 sites were chosen across the cities of Recife, Santo André and Itabuna. The selection of sites was influenced by both the presence of on-going World Bank projects and the desire for regional variety population diversity. According to Melo:

Greater Recife (3.3 million) – the country's fourth most populated metropolitan area – was chosen because of ongoing World Bank projects in the area and because of its role as the regional metropolis of the country's most impoverished region, the Northeast. Recife has one of the highest unemployment rates and the highest percentage of families below the poverty line of metropolitan areas in Brazil. The data for the metropolitan area of Recife are significantly worse because it include [sic] the impoverished peripheral municipalities (Melo, 1999 p. 8).

In discussing the selection criteria for the metropolitan area of São Paulo (16 million), Melo commented 'it represents the country's largest and most industrialized region... [and] Santo André epitomizes a highly industrialized area, which is undergoing rapid change as a result of job losses in the auto industry' (pp. 8-9). Itabuna, a mid-sized city [population 150,000] in the Brazilian hinterland, was to 'counterbalance the metropolitan focus of Recife and São Paulo' (p. 9). Itabuna's economy was formerly dominated by cocoa plantations but has since slid into impoverishment. Melo's exact summary of each site (source: Melo, 1999 p. 10) is presented in Table 6. The location of each site is shown on Map 1.

Table 6: Summary of site characteristics

Recife	
Padre Jordânio (pop. 2,500)	Newly formed and very poor favela bordering a flooded area. The community is fairly organized. Threat of eviction.
Bode (pop. 30,000)	The area's urban infrastructure is one of best of all sites in Recife. The community is highly organized. The municipality implemented projects in the area. Several NGOs work in the area.
Vila União (pop. 2,300)	The only site in Recife where land tenure was legalized. The municipality implemented projects in the area. The community is fairly organized.
Morro da Conceição (pop. 9,000)	40 year old favela with very active community located on a hill side. One of the best endowed areas in terms of public services. Several NGOs work in the area.
Borborema (pop. 2,400)	Newly formed and one of the poorest sites overall. It is located bordering a canal. The community is poorly organized. Very poor housing conditions.
Entra a Pulso (pop. 5,000)	Favela located adjacent a very large shopping mall. Very active community. Local government and the shopping mall implemented projects in the area. Very poor housing conditions. Threat of eviction. Several NGOs work in the area.
Santo André	
Sacadura Cabral (pop. 3,000)	Municipality is implementing projects in the area. Extremely densely occupied area, with very poor housing stock, very close to city center. Very active community organization.
Vila Junqueira (pop. 900)	Municipality implementing projects in the area. Active community organization. Located in the outskirts of Santo André.
Itabuna	
Novo Horizonte (pop. 4,000)	Newly formed favela. One of the poorest and most violent sites. High level of community organization. No NGOs works in the area.
Nova California (pop. 2,500)	Newly formed favela. High level of community organization. Active NGOs in the area. Some public services are available in the area.



Map 1: Locations of Recife, Itabuna and Santo Andre

4.3.c Reporting process

At the completion of each participatory appraisal within a community, the research team was required to complete a synthesis report. Each site synthesis report would be reviewed by all the research team, using the methodology and checklist given by Shah (1999). Each site report consisted of the following details:

- Site name
- Background [a description of the site]
- Study process [including names of researchers, dates, number of participants met]
- Results of the research
- Conclusions and observations
- Annexes

(ammended from Shah, 1999 pp. 52-57)

The multiple site reports were then gathered in order to inform the country synthesis report. It is the individual site reports that will be used for analysis in this paper.

4.3.d Data available for analysis

The data we have used comes from two components of each Brazilian site report: the group discussions on cause-impact and the individual interviews. The group discussions typically involved around 50 men and women [groups sizes of about 12], and were used to explore the links between perceptions of the different causes of poverty and their impact. Though all sites were expected to conduct group discussions, we have data from eight. According to the methodology guidelines:

The group was informed that they would be discussing the causes and impact of poverty. For each cause the group identified, a card was prepared to represent it. These cards were placed on one side of the word 'poverty'. Similarly, the group was asked to identify the impacts of poverty, and place the cards with the impact mentioned on them on the other side of the word 'poverty'. Finally the group was asked to link cause and impact. Once the diagram was ready, the group was asked to discuss possible solutions for the problems. This method was also used to analyze both well-being and problems (Melo, 1999 p. 7).

The interview case studies were based on one-to-one, open-ended discussions with individuals that were purposed to provide specific illustrations to highlight and support the results obtained from the group discussion (Melo, 1999 p. 8). The original goal was that each site would include an interview with a poor man, a poor woman, a young poor man or woman, a woman who was poor but is better-off now, and a man who was poor and is better-off now. Though the national report claims that 50 interview case studies were generated, it seems that we have received only 48 – the two Itabuna sites only offered four each, while the eight other sites offered 5.

In practice, we see that the interviewees were a mixture of men and women, with ages ranging from 16 to 67 years old. Marital and/or parental status was varied, frequently including those who had lost a spouse through death. Occupational status ranged from unemployed, students, and homemakers to those with low-paying, if stable, employment. A number of interviewees expressed that they were ascending out of poverty and a small number were considered to be community leaders. It is important to note the national report stressed that though the interviewees were considered poor, they were not from the poorest and most excluded groups in urban Brazil, the *pedintes* and *esmolés* [beggars] (Melo, 1999 p. 28).

Therefore, our data pool consists of eight group discussions [involving a minimum of 434 people] and 48 individual interviews. Statistical data with regards to levels of schooling, literacy, ethnic groups and access to basic infrastructure [electricity, water, paved roads, post offices] for each location was provided at the beginning of each site report and will not be discussed here.

4.3.e Quality assurance

Given the size and breadth of the research being undertaken, the lead researchers expected each and every member of the research process to take responsibility for maintaining high research standards (Shah, 1999 p. 47). All team members were required to have previous training and experience in PRA research and would agree to follow the given guidelines. Furthermore, an umbrella monitoring team was in place to review site reports and provide on-going feedback. This is one method of satisfying issues regarding the credibility of qualitative research data (Bazeley, 2013 p. 409).

It was recommended in the guidelines (Shah, 1999 p. 46) that each team would spend five-to-six days at each site. Three-to-four days should be dedicated for the fieldwork and two days to complete the site report. Once the site report was ready, the team was expected to present back the main findings to the community. Furthermore, the guidelines expected that all results would be verified by triangulation. Researchers were obliged to verify responses through other means, such as discussing a topic with a different person or group or using different methods to report on the same topic. This satisfies another two aspects of the data credibility issues of qualitative research, according to Bazeley (2013 pp. 406, 408).

To give us further assurance in the quality of the studies, we have appraised the methodology using the qualitative assessment tool developed by Hawker et al. (2002 p. 1292 and Appendix D) and frequently used elsewhere (Seymour et al., 2010, Oh and Gastmans, 2013, c.f. Schluter et al., 2008). Hawker et al. (2002) produced an instrument that is capable of appraising qualitative studies, taking nine components in detail: title and abstract, introduction and aims, method and data, sampling, data analysis, ethics and bias, results, transferability or generalizability and implications and usefulness. In our review, each of these was calculated against criteria and then rated on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 4 (very good) to produce a total score out of 36. A score below 18 would indicate a poor study and the paper would be rejected. The methodology outlined by Shah (1999)

and followed by Melo (1999) returned a score of 33 – losing two points due to a lack of in-depth literature review [‘introduction and aim’] and one for a lack of clear evidence of how confidentiality was assured to participants [‘ethics and bias’].

4.3.f Recognized limitations of the *Voices / Consultations* studies

The *Voices* authors recognize that there are a number of limitations with the overall study (see Narayan et al., 2000 pp. 19-25), and it is appropriate to recognize them here. The four major limitations regard: the quality of the documents used, the variety of data used, human error involved in analysis, and human bias involved in collecting and collating the data.

The issue of the quality of documents used is an oft-raised concern, specifically with regards to qualitative research [some of which we have already addressed in our critique of PM in section 3.5]. Bazeley (2013 pp. 403-405) refers to this as this issue of ‘credibility’, which she reports is not strictly speaking a question of accuracy, but more of trustworthiness: has the researcher done what they needed to do in order for the audience not to dismiss the work that has been done and the inferences that have been made? The authors of the *Voices* study maintain that ‘every attempt was made to select documents that had rich qualitative data’, but accept that ‘the findings remain dependent on data’ (Narayan et al., 2000 p. 19).

The second issue regarding the variety of data collected was raised in recognition that many of the PPA studies analysed were originally undertaken for different purposes. This means that the data sources varied in size, representativeness and composition of respondents. Though this was a concern for the greater *Voices* study, it has less impact on our work as the Brazil data set [as part of the *Consultations* research], was specifically commissioned and therefore more meticulous in its methodology and requirements for data collection and inclusion.

The third issue raised was that of human error during analysis and this is important for us. Rather than relying on the analysis provided by Melo, we will be analysing the data ourselves using NVivo for Mac software (QSR International, 1999-2014),⁵² one of the premier software packages for

⁵² The *Voices* study used NVivo’s predecessor, QSR NUD*IST, to conduct a systematic analysis. See p. 294 of NARAYAN, D., PATEL, R., SCHAFFT, K., RADEMACHER, A. & KOCH-SCHULTE, S. 2000. *Voices of the poor. Can anyone hear us?*, Oxford University Press.

analysing qualitative and mixed methods research. We found that *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo* (Bazeley, 2007) was a helpful resource here.

The fourth and final issue raised was that of human bias, and regrettably whilst the conscientious researcher can reduce this, its absence can never be proven. Narayan et al. (2000 pp. 19-20) detail the lengths that researchers were expected to go to in order to reduce the possibility of bias – independent string searches, group meetings, checking merging patterns against the number counts, and frequently returning to the original documents – and we have little choice but to accept this as the best solution to this limitation.

4.4 Coding the Data

In order to assess the validity of our presupposed themes, we first imported both the group discussions and the individual case studies provided by Melo into NVivo. These are our *Source Items*. We then needed to code our data, which in its simplest sense, is a way of ‘classifying and then tagging text with codes... in order to facilitate later retrieval’ (Bazeley, 2007 p. 66). We therefore created three ‘parent nodes’⁵³ to coincide with column two in Table 5: The coding framework [p. 162] and labelled them with the themes of ‘Natural Causes’, ‘Laziness’, and ‘Oppression’. We then created numerous ‘child nodes’ to coincide with the subthemes presented in column four of Table 5. For organizational clarity, each specific theme from the text was kept in a third-level node and labelled according to its subtype. Once a reference was cited, it was coded under one of the parent/child nodes.

It took between ten and fifteen minutes to process and code each interview and group discussion. Coding involved a detailed, slow, reflective exploration of the interviews in order to find any and all references to the causes of poverty. This coding was mostly done at the level of words, but occasionally at the level of sentences, clauses and larger units of information. When coding at the word level, care was taken to only code once per idea, so as to prevent multiple references to the same idea. The only exception to this is when the same idea resurfaced later in the interview – in this case it was recorded again in recognition that it was a particularly strong idea for the interviewee and should be treated accordingly in our analysis. It is also important to remember that we are

⁵³ A ‘node’ is NVivo’s representation of a topic, phenomenon, idea, value or opinion; a ‘parent node’ is simply the higher node in a hierarchy and a ‘child node’ is a more specific, subset of a parent node.

analysing the appearance of references [i.e., how many times it was raised by an interviewee], but we are not assessing the strength of the feeling or ranking them in order of priority.⁵⁴

At times there were subtle and interesting references in the data that seemed to cross the boundaries of the framework. Admittedly, making a decision on which theme a subset theme would come under was at times difficult: at these times it was important to look at the context of the comment and to allocate it to the most pressing subtheme. At the conclusion of the first round of coding and noding, we reviewed the data again to see if there were any themes developing that would alter the way we had coded earlier texts, and we made appropriate adjustments.

4.4.a Notes on coding

We must make two important notes on the coding process:

1. The interviewees did not always specify that an event or scenario was the direct cause of their poverty. However, if we identified a link – even if ever so subtle – between a cause and an outcome of poverty, it was coded accordingly. A subtle link could include comments such as ‘The problems began when...’, ‘Life is difficult because...’ or ‘In our community there is no...’ We see this as a credible method for interpreting the data presented.
2. As much as possible, while still staying true to the data, we have endeavoured to match the biblical description with what is reasonably equivalent in a contemporary Brazilian society. For instance, Wright’s reference to ‘Royal’ power [p. 65] has been reframed ‘Governing Power’ to reflect the ruling presidential democracy. Additionally, infrastructure that a community should reasonably expect to be provided by a modern government – access to water, electricity, sewerage etc. – will come under this theme [see Rodd’s comment on the biblical expectation of a king to provide for his populace on p. 66].

4.5 Results

Following our coding, we can make a number of interesting observations regarding both the quantity of references to poverty and the types of references made. As the purpose of this exercise was to

⁵⁴ This is perhaps an example of the limitation of a secondary analysis – we were not able to ask the participants to give an ordinal, interval or ratio scale for their response. We have to work with a nominal reference.

look for common, universal themes, we have selected not to analyse the responses by their individual variables [e.g. age or gender].

4.5.a References to causes of poverty

From the 48 interviews, we found a total of 175 references to the causes of poverty. From the 8 group discussions, we found a total of 27 references. A summary based on geographical location is presented in Table 7:

Table 7: Total references in interviews and discussions

LOCATION	REFERENCES	
	Interview	Group Discussion
Recife		
Padre Jordânio	6	4
Bode	17	3
Vila União	17	Did not provide
Morro da Conceição	28	4
Borborema	15	5
Entra a Pulso	6	Did not provide
Santo André		
Sacadura Cabral	7	2
Vila Junqueira	12	6
Itabuna		
Novo Horizonte	35	0
Nova California	32	3
Total	175	27

A summary of themes, subthemes and specific scenarios [including an example reference] is presented in Appendix II: Themes and Subthemes from Interviews and Discussion Groups. To help us clarify and represent the most common words, trends and patterns emerging from our coding, we generated a word cloud of the top 100 words [three letters or more] that appeared in our nodes [i.e. only words that have already been selected for referencing, not the entire transcript]. This word cloud is presented in Image 1:

Natural Causes returned less than half of the references of Oppression and the leading reference was to a lack of food. Many interviewees spoke about malnourished childhoods, while others spoke of currently leading large families and experiencing difficulty providing a sufficient amount of food for the multiple mouths. In some communities there was access to food banks or “baskets” which were frequented by labourers whose meagre incomes proved insufficient to pay for the daily nutritional necessities.

The second most referenced item under Natural Causes was the death of a father during childhood [abandonment, where the father has completely refused all contact and support, was included in this category]. Paternal death was tragically a common experience among the interviewees, and it frequently had the double impact of both removing the primary source of income for many families and frequently triggering a complete family breakdown:

‘I was very connected to my father, with his death our family dismantled...every one had to get along by themselves’

- man in Recife, aged 35 years

In other cases, paternal death would necessitate a child leaving education in order to work and provide for the remaining family members. Sickness and disability to self was the third-most referenced cause under Natural Causes. This was primarily because of the reduction of work opportunities available.

Laziness

Leading causes:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Debt | 1 |
| • Gambling | 1 |
| • Living Beyond Personal Means | 1 |
| • Lack of Consciousness ⁵⁵ | 1 |

A very significant observation is the almost-negligible number of references in the dataset to Laziness as a precursor to poverty. Three of the four subthemes [Debt, Gambling and Lack of Consciousness] were raised during group discussions. The final one was offered in an interview

⁵⁵ From the context, this is understood to equate with laziness, or a lack of desire to accept the responsibility of working.

with the president of a community, who felt that 'extravagance, in which people do not think about the next day' was a significant cause of poverty in his community.⁵⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, not one comment in Laziness was self-referential – all mentions focused on the laziness of others.

Oppression

Leading causes:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| • Governing Exploitation | 77 references |
| • Social Exploitation | 23 |
| • Judicial Exploitation | 14 |

The most recurring subtheme under the banner of Governing Exploitation was a lack of sewage and sanitation services within the community [20 references]. Though this might seem surprising at first, it perhaps represents the modern conviction that adequate sanitation services are an expected public service. To be denied this service may be an indication of being disregarded by those in political power and may represent a form of social exclusion. Many interviewees also equated the presence of open sewers with the onset of disease and discomfort within the community.

Second to sanitation services was a feeling of maltreatment or disinterest by public officials [17 references, also under the theme Governing Exploitation]. The interviewees frequently expressed a disappointment that their public officials – from local administration to the national government – ignored their plight. It was often felt that politicians feigned interest in their community needs in the lead-up to elections, but delivered very little support to the poor communities once in office. One young man from Sacadura Cabral, aged 21, expressed a determination to educate himself in the rights of the people because, in his eyes, 'the politicians abuse and use their knowledge to take advantage of those that have not this knowledge'.

The third most prominent reference came under the theme of Social Exploitation and regarded the fear [or experience] of social violence. Though some interviewees regarded their communities to be safe and cohesive, the majority believed that it was 'very dangerous' to live in their

⁵⁶ The meaning of this 'extravagance' is unclear. It is possible that the man is referring to Carnival celebrations, which are certainly extravagant. However, the context of his comment seems to be simply with the actions of individuals and gives no reference to larger societal customs. We therefore see it best to refrain from making assumptions as to the nature of this extravagance.

neighbourhood, that they were frequently 'exposed to violence' or that 'the community offers no safety, particularly at night, when the residents do not leave home fearing the invasion of criminals'. The impact of violence – either real or feared – was that members of the community would lock themselves away, fearing abuse or robbery if they left their homes.

4.5.c New themes

An important part of the process of a Framework Synthesis is the recognition that additional themes or subthemes may be arising from the text [see 'The process of our Framework Synthesis' on p. 160]. As the coding process unfolded, we began to recognize additional references to the causes of poverty that seemingly fit outside our framework:

Laziness and the “laziness” of others

Wright's observations on Laziness only took into consideration the action if it occurred on the part of the impoverished person. However, a re-occurring theme in the data was that someone related to the “lazy” person often experienced poverty, particularly if the latter would normally be expected to provide income or wisely spend income on behalf of the former: an example would be the child of an alcoholic or the wife of a drug abuser.⁵⁷ In these cases, we see the need for another child node under Laziness called 'Lack of Self-Discipline [Other]'. Under this subtheme, we placed the nodes 'Substance Abuse by Parent', 'Substance Abuse by Spouse' and 'Substance Abuse by Other'.

Laziness – or lack of opportunity?

Unemployment, and the related underemployment, is unquestionably the largest cause of poverty according to the interviewees. References to willingness to work, but a lack of jobs available, were frequent and widespread across all the communities. At times the respondents placed the blame on factors external to them: the government for not providing enough job opportunities; a downturn in the community of people willing and able to purchase their produce; the loss of their employer's crops by disease or plague; the increasing mechanisation of their jobs; or the outsourcing of their work to cheaper labour elsewhere. At other times the respondents identified internal factors: their lack of training or skills meant finding work in a competitive environment was very difficult. Not

⁵⁷ It is not entirely implausible to see a connection here with the plight of Job, who suffered as an “innocent” victim of someone else's sin [see p. 114].

surprisingly, there were consistent connections between childhood labour and a lack of educational opportunities:

I was raised by my grandmother and it was a terrible loss at 13. Then I had to work, had to stop studying.

- an adult man who's father left his family when he was 13 years old.

Insufficient housing

A final theme that emerged outside of the framework was that of insufficient housing. The interviewees made frequent references to houses made of wood, plastic, straw or paper, or living under bridges. Numerous respondents had spent time living without a bed, or at the house of a friend or relative.

4.6 Updated Framework

An important part of the synthesis is to recognize new themes and to adjust the framework accordingly [hence minimising the criticism that this approach simply affirms what the researcher set out to find, as discussed on p. 24]. We therefore assessed the new ideas and generated new child nodes to accommodate them. When we had revised our inclusion parameters to accommodate for the new subthemes [an additional 17], we conducted a new NVivo query. We found a new aggregate of 253 references [formerly 175] to the causes of poverty within the 48 interviews. From the 8 group discussions, we found a total of 53 references [formerly 24]. We found there were now 120 references to poverty caused by Oppression [equal with previous], 74 references to Natural Causes [formerly 51] and 11 to Laziness [formerly 4]. There were an additional 101 references to an issue connected with income/expenditure ratio, skills, education or employment. We have provided details of all the new themes in Appendix III: New Themes and Subthemes from Interviews and Discussion Groups. A new summary based on geographical location is presented in Table 8:

Table 8: Total references in interviews and discussions [revised]

LOCATION	REFERENCES	
Recife	Interview	Group Discussion
Padre Jordânio	11	9
Bode	28	6
Vila União	26	Did not provide
Morro da Conceição	38	5
Borborema	24	7
Entra a Pulso	12	Did not provide
Santo André		
Sacadura Cabral	11	6
Vila Junqueira	19	9
Itabuna		
Novo Horizonte	46	4
Nova Califórnia	38	7
Total	253	53

To help us review the impact of the inclusion of the new themes, we re-generated the word cloud of the top 100 words [three letters or more] that now appeared in our nodes. This word cloud is presented in Image 2, below:

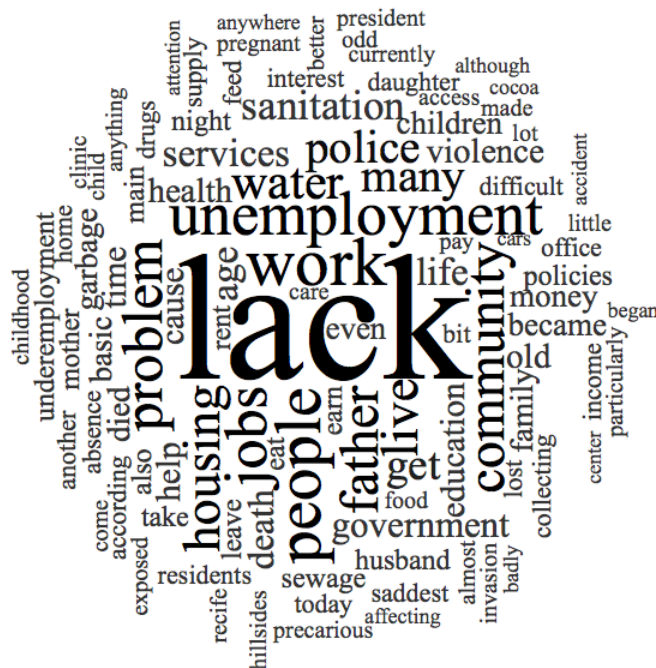


Image 2: Top 100 words in coded data [revised]

In our new word cloud, we still observe the theme 'lack' presenting strongly, but the original matters of police, sanitation, water, father and government are now intermingled with, and sometimes overshadowed by, concerns of productivity: 'work' [40 references], 'unemployment' [36], and 'jobs'

[34] are the new major topics. This reinforces the significance of these new work-related subthemes in the revised query.

4.7 Review and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to address research question 3: 'According to sample participatory data, what is the aetiology of poverty?' To answer this, we have used data from the 1999 Brazilian National Report, prepared to inform the 2000/01 WDR. The process of placing Wright's model through a Framework Synthesis involving data from this study on poverty has been fruitful: the results of our synthesis show that many of Wright's assumptions have indeed been supported by the interviews and group discussions, but we have also observed the emergence of three significant subthemes [particularly concerning educational opportunities, employment and adequate markets] and the almost complete refutation of the theme of laziness. The final step in conducting a Framework Synthesis is to review the evidence and present an updated framework. This will largely be the focus of Chapter 5 but it is appropriate to present a justification here first.

- We see the need to review the idea of Natural Causes. We take issue with the assumption that all these causes are indeed "natural" and perhaps would be better known by the title similar to that endorsed by Keller, when he renamed this group 'Calamities.' A designation such as this reinforces the abrupt and disastrous nature of these triggers, but allows for the anything-but-natural references to the deaths of parents and spouses.
- We need to deal with the most glaring observation: the absence of any reference to employment or education in Wright's model. Given their rate of occurrence in the data, we feel that they must somehow be included as a subtheme and placed under an appropriate top-level theme.
- We need to reconsider the weight given to the theme of Laziness, considering its almost-complete absence from the data. We suggest that it either be removed from the list or that it come under another suitable top-level theme. However, we also recognize the problematic nature of expecting people to self-reference their own laziness and we will need to look at this further.
- Finally, we see the need to review the idea of Oppression. Wright's model placed a heavy emphasis on direct oppression, where the agent was actively seeking to subdue or exploit

their object. However, we see in the data a need for a larger emphasis on the onset of poverty caused when leaders desert sections of a community.

We do recognize that the Brazilian survey was conducted entirely in urban, industrialised sites and that Wright's model presupposed a more rural, agriculturally based society [see section 2.2.a], requiring us to be vigilant before attempting to make a direct connection between the two. If the early, rural Israel is removed from our Brazilian setting, is there an era in their history that is closer to our contemporary setting? If there is any, we see that it is most likely the time of the prophets. Here, Jewish society had become more urban focussed, gainful work on family land had eroded because of a failure to uphold land divisions and the wealthy classes had physically and morally distanced themselves from the poorer elements of society – it is at this time that biblical life looked most like our sample sites. It is perhaps no surprise that we see in our sample such a resonance with the theme of Oppression, for this was the leading complaint of the prophets and seems fundamentally connected with economic inequalities.

Another point worth bringing to attention is the variety of forms that the reasons for poverty have taken. The most common reference was to 'lack' – yet this noun by itself can hardly be understood as telling the complete picture. Looking further, we see references to the object of the lack: food, housing, income etc. At other points, the reference was to physical and tangible events, such as a house-destroying fire or a debilitating physical injury. As these reasons operate in different spheres, it raises the question whether there are different types of causes: a taxonomy of causes?

Lastly, we should present a comment on the quality of studies that we have analysed. From external reviews of the Bank's methodology, we are confident that the quality of the primary data was high and that the methods and samples involved adequately meet our research needs. Our general findings seem to align with the Bank's own researchers, who concluded at the end of the WDR 2000/01 that the causes of poverty according to their global research were [i] Lack of income and assets, [ii] Powerlessness, and [iii] Vulnerability (World Bank, 2000 p. 34). Conversely, they identified opportunity, empowerment, and security as the keys to alleviating poverty (World Bank, 2000 p. vii). Though our research question was different, we take confidence from these results, as we see connections between the Bank's understandings of 'vulnerability' with our 'natural causes' [ours sees the need to identify the triggering incident], their 'lack' with our 'laziness' [ours addresses

the root cause of the lack, though we see a need for refinement here], and their 'powerlessness' with our 'oppression' [ours addresses the instigating agent of the powerlessness]. This new framework – including a detailed account of how it might connect with the wider literature base – will be discussed in much greater depth in the following chapter, and the implications will be considered at the end of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5 A CRITICAL SYNTHESIS ON THE AETIOLOGY OF POVERTY

The purpose of this thesis is the development of a robust biblical framework through which to understand poverty causation that can stand with academic integrity alongside its contemporary secular counterparts. Our method for achieving this has been to explore the biblical view as presented by Wright, converse with the leading secular theories, and compare and contrast Wright's observations with qualitative data from people identified as experiencing poverty. The point has come to assess the commonalities between the three voices and to offer a revised framework of poverty causation that remains true to each. In effect, we are aiming to reposition the biblical framework and place it within our contemporary environment, giving due consideration to modern circumstances and research yet remaining faithful to the teaching and authority of Scripture. We are aspiring to understand the biblical model into the 21st century.

We remember from section 2.5.c the difficulties that we face when striving to transfer biblical principles to non-biblical circumstances, or even non-biblical times. We took guidance from multiple interlocutors and ultimately resolved these issues by determining that we would look beyond the specific commands or directives in search of the ideas and ethics that supersede their contextual framing and are applicable to all of humanity, regardless of time, space or culture. Furthermore, we concluded that such universal ethics are not only possible, but almost expected: the Scriptures are God's words given to respond to, and clarify much of, the individually and corporately recognized needs or desires of humanity. Thus this final chapter will gather our research together and present a revised model of Tri-Causation applicable for the 21st century.

We will begin by triangulating the key principles from the three sources under Wright's initial headings of natural causes, laziness and oppression. Following this, we will synthesize the three to determine whether Wright's model holds or if it should be reviewed and reinterpreted. Finally, we will present our proposal for understanding the aetiology of poverty, according to our research.

5.1 Natural Causes: key principles

5.1.a Catastrophic events are very likely to be a cause of poverty

From the three sources of information [biblical, World Bank and wider literature], it is evident that the presence and experience of some form of catastrophic "natural" event is inversely correlated

with human well-being. From the biblical texts, we see that the Egyptian famine caused a widespread decline in food availability [Genesis 47:4, 13] and rife financial poverty [47:15]. The famine in Bethlehem caused the family of Elimelech to migrate from their home [Ruth 1:1], and Elimelech's death caused the impoverishment of his widow, Naomi [Ruth 1:20-21]. The *super*-natural stripping of Job's assets and health impoverished him in every sphere of his life: physical [Job 1:13-14; 2:8-10]; social [2:7-8; 6:14-23; 16:10; 30:1-15; 19:13-19]; spiritual [23:8]; and emotional [7:11; 10:1; 27:2].

The World Bank data frequently cited some form of adverse event as a cause of poverty. 74 of the 306 references [20.5 per cent] were considered to be referring to calamities, though mostly on a personal level. Frequently this event was the death of a provider, such as the loss of a father or mother at an early age. A 56-year-old widow stated 'the most tragic fact of her life was her mother's death, because she had to work in order to survive', whereas a 58-year-old married woman reported after her father's death she began working in domestic services 'since it was the only way to have a place to live and eat.' Sickness and disability was another recurring theme, particularly when it affected children. A common response was for adults to leave paid work in order to look after an ill family member. The loss of income coupled with medical bills was a reminder of the notorious 'coupling of disadvantages' discussed by Sen earlier [p. 121].

Damage to personal assets was also a feature: a man from Recife said that 'nothing has been worse then [*sic*] the fire in my house', while another man recalled the childhood experience of finding himself on the street with his family after a flood destroyed his house, furniture and electrical appliances. With the family needing extra money to recoup their loss, he began selling cigarettes on the street at aged 10.

While the MA, CA and SE theoretical literature speak very little about the impact of catastrophes on poverty levels, it is apparent in the wider literature. Worldwide disaster data from 2013, the most recent annual breakdown available, shows that there were 330 reported disasters triggered by geophysical, meteorological and climatological hazards in that year. These events affected 108 countries, resulting in more than 21,600 fatalities, disturbing 96.5 million people and triggering destruction and losses to the value of \$118.6 billion. Yet 2013 was actually much calmer than the preceding years: the typical annual death toll from such disasters in the decade 2003-2012 was

106,654; the average annual number affected was 216 million and average annual losses were \$157 billion. Between 2008 and 2012, a range of natural hazard events displaced 143.9m individuals in 125 countries – and many of these displacements were repeated or prolonged (Twigg, 2015 p. 1).

In their 2012 study on natural disasters, human development and poverty in Mexico, Rodriguez-Oreggia, De La Fuente et al.⁵⁸ surveyed pre- and post- disaster welfare outcomes, whilst controlling for geographical and natural characteristics, socioeconomic factors, institutional and local administrative capacity, financial coping mechanisms and political covariates. Their results showed a ‘significant and adverse effect of natural disasters on both human development and poverty’ (p. 453). The effect of a disaster on the Human Development Index was similar to going back two years on the scale, on average, and the effect was largest from floods and droughts.

5.1.b Catastrophic events are rarely entirely “natural”

We have learnt that “naturalness” of events that lead to poverty may be overstated. Firstly, though it seems almost an ephemeral comment, is recognizing the label of “natural causes” can lead to the mistaken belief that nature is fundamentally unpredictable, dangerous and an ever-present risk to human welfare. However, we agree with Blaikie et al. (2014 p. 6) when they state that nature should not just be seen as a source of risk but also of opportunity. Our natural environment presents vast prospects for human security, protection and promotion: the same forests that present a risk of wildfire also provide wood for housing and food for nutrition; the same plains that are at risk of flooding also provide flat land for business, housing and farming; the same volcanic slopes that provide a risk in the event of eruption are frequently also very fertile grounds for agriculture.

Unfortunately, much of the biblical literature is silent on the processes behind natural causes leading to poverty. The early famines in Egypt and Bethlehem are simply stated as matter-of-fact instances of this ever-present threat to an agrarian society; Job’s impoverishment is a result of super-natural forces; and the wider calamitous experiences of Israel could be seen as evidence of sin or the outworking of the curses of Deuteronomy 28. Alas, this is where we must be content to

⁵⁸ The lead researcher on this project, Eduardo Rodriguez-Oreggia, is a Mexican-born economist. Educated at the London School of Economics (PhD) and the University of Barcelona (PhD), Rodriguez-Oreggia is currently the Director of the PhD Program in Public Policy, EGAP ITESM, Campus State of Mexico & Chair of Social Policy and Well-being research program.

allow the Bible to speak for itself and not force our expectations upon it: the authorial intent behind the calamity narratives was surely to record the instance and outcome of the event, rather than to provide theoretical inferences on *why* the instance occurred and *why* the result was poverty.

Likewise, the World Bank data was also understated on the links between human and natural forces in the development of a calamity. The underlying questions of these events [what was the trigger that caused the death of a parent, or the beginning of the fire? What were the earlier steps in the development of this calamitous event?] were not dealt with in the data and was therefore difficult to represent in the synthesis. This is perhaps an example of where a primary study would have been advantageous, as we could have analysed these matters further.

However, when we turn our attention to the established literature, we see the body of evidence demonstrates that it is very rare to find an event that has not somehow been influenced or increased by its interaction with humanity. By itself "nature" is not the concern: it is humanity's ability to safely interact with the natural environment and minimise their exposure to the risks:

The 'natural' and the 'human' are, therefore, so inextricably bound together in almost all disaster situations... that disasters cannot be understood to be 'natural' in any straightforward way (Blaikie et al., 2014 p. 8).

Perhaps the most significant research in the literature to bring this nature/human dynamic to light has been conducted by Amartya Sen, whose work in recent decades led to a major reorientation in the study of one of the most enduring catastrophic events: famines. In Sen's ground-breaking contribution, *Poverty and famines: an essay on entitlement and deprivation* (Sen, 1981), and the subsequent, *Resources, value and development* (Sen, 1984), Sen challenged the prevailing supposition that total food-availability decline (FAD) is the chief cause of all famines. Sen argued that the more proximate cause is so-called 'entitlement failure', which can occur even when there is no decline in aggregate food production. In other words, whether or not someone experiences famine is more concerned with the surrounding human interactions than a natural decline in food options.

Later work by Sen supported his original thesis that famines are not necessarily caused by food availability declines. Sen observed the phenomenon that 'no major famine has ever taken place in a country with a multiparty democracy with regular election and a reasonably free press' (Sen, 1995

p. 16), concluding that in a democratic system with a free press, the occurrence of a famine will predictably reduce the approval of the government; thus, the fear of being removed from power stimulates democratic governments to take measures to prevent or at least mitigate famines. By seeing famines as economic disasters and not just food crises (Sen, 1981 p. 162), Sen demonstrates support for seeing the development of a disaster as one that involves complex interactions between nature [droughts, crop failures, adverse weather etc.] and humanity [economic, social, cultural and political interactions].

Despite the silence from the biblical literature and the World Bank data, we see that the principle of catastrophic events rarely being entirely “natural” to be true – and this is in direct opposition to Wright’s claim that ‘no explanation or rationalization seems to be available’ (Wright, 2004 p. 169). Though the Bible does not affirm the principle [it might be obtusely referenced in our discussion on Oppression], it also does not reject it – and the wider literature would show it to be accurate.

5.1.c “Hazards” are distinct from “disasters”

Frederick C. Cuny [1944 – 1995] was a civil engineer who worked as a disaster relief specialist and whose writings are prominent in the literature. In his piece, *Disasters and development* (Cuny, 1983), he made the fundamental distinction between a *hazard*⁵⁹ and a *disaster*. The hazard – be it an earthquake, flood, tropical cyclone, drought or other – is not the primary problem; it is only the trigger of the primary problem. A hazard is only the natural agent that ‘transforms a vulnerable human condition into a disaster... the hazards themselves are not the disasters but rather a factor in causing a disaster’ (p. 21).

The factors that determine how the hazard eventuates into a disaster are twofold: the event’s primary effect on people and their environment; and the human activities that increase its impact (Cuny, 1983 p. 21). Although Cuny maintains that ‘no two disasters are alike’ (p. 44), a hazard is considered a disaster when it causes significant disruptive effects in one or more of the following

⁵⁹ Hazards can be rapid-onset and cataclysmic, or long-term and continuing, and can occur on various levels. Macro-hazards are major threats that adversely disrupt the macro-economic balance of a country. This is typically experienced in the form of natural perils including: floods and tsunamis; heat waves, drought and wildfires; superstorms, blizzards and hailstorms; earthquakes, avalanches, eruptions; epidemics; and environmental wreckage. Manmade hazards that are not connected to environmental order [such as war and economic collapse] should also be considered macro-hazards. Meso-hazards arise in a similar fashion to their predecessor, albeit on a smaller scale and affecting only a local group or community. Micro-hazards include the effect of the above on the specific individual, but also arise in the form of personal un- or under-employment, disablement or sickness, death or disablement of primary income-earner, family breakdown and crime – this was evident in the data [this list is descriptive, not exhaustive, and the interplay between the various influences is duly recognized].

four areas: environmental, medical, administrative and managerial, and social and economic (p. 44). The environmental effects include the damage and destruction of homes, buildings, food and water supplies and the presence of unburied human or animal carcasses. The medical effects include traumatic injuries, emotional distress, epidemic disease and indigenous disease.

However, even the mere exposure to a hazard may be welfare-damaging, as Rodriguez-Oreggia et al. (2012) found. When households are regularly or consistently exposed to a hazard, they tend to adopt less than optimal income-generating behaviours in order to reduce their exposure in the event of a disaster. The researchers indicate that this behaviour can actually be a promoter of poverty, regardless of the eventuation of a hazard into a disaster. This is because when households assume that their assets, and thus their livelihoods, are vulnerable, they are likely to abstain from investment in wealth-generating resources, particularly if the anticipated wealth-generation is beyond the immediate future.

This sort of vulnerability was picked up in the World Bank data during the interviews with a young man and a young woman in Morro da Conceição – a 40 year old favela located on a hillside in Recife. Both interviewees noted that the ever-present exposure to potential landslides following rain was a major challenge for their community. It is easily foreseeable that members of the community would be reluctant to invest in wealth-generating resources if they could be destroyed swiftly by a calamity. Furthermore, this was a hazard that only the poor faced: 'The well-off have telephones, car; the poor are homeless, need community help and live at hillsides', said the adult woman. It was also noted by the interviewees that this hazard could be removed entirely through the installation of retaining walls – nullifying the threat of disaster in the event of heavy rain, protecting the community and their assets, and even perhaps promoting investment.

Again, biblical commentary on this principle is difficult to ascertain, largely because it was not the concern of the authors.

5.1.d Disasters do not affect all equally

The major premise of Sen's entitlement approach to famine theorizing, as discussed first on p. 192, is that it shifts the analytical focus to the inability of groups of people to acquire food. He saw a lack of evidence to confirm that famines affect all parts of a given population equally: to paraphrase him,

'famines don't kill kings' (Sen, 1995 pp. 16-17). He theorized that in famines, food was typically still available to those with the power to access it. Sen demonstrates that in many instances of famine, food supplies were not drastically reduced. Instead, it was a change in social and economic factors [such as diminishing wages, unemployment, growing food prices, and poor food-distribution systems] that led to starvation among certain groups in society:

Indeed, it is by no means clear that there has ever occurred a famine in which all groups in a country have suffered from starvation, since different groups typically do have different commanding powers over food, and an over-all shortage brings out those contrasting powers in stark clarity (Sen, 1981 p. 43).

This observation is clear in the biblical literature. Despite there being 'no food in all the land' and 'the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine' [Genesis 47:13], there is no indication that Pharaoh's royal household were in lack [perhaps because of the forethought of Joseph in hoarding grain, but perhaps other factors were at play]; they had enough surplus food to distribute to the starving populace [47:19]. Likewise, the famine in Bethlehem is only recorded as affecting Elimelech and his family, yet surely neighbouring farmers were exposed to the same climatic conditions? Likewise, we frequently see in the World Bank data references to parental death causing young children drop out of school in order to support the family – a scenario less likely in a wealthier family.

Macro-level research by both Kahn (2005b) and Stromberg (2007) finds that the events that trigger a disaster are not statistically any more severe in developing regions than in developed regions i.e. there is no apparent relationship between economic development and exposure to natural hazards. Stromberg found that high-income areas in Europe, North America and Japan are as highly exposed to natural hazards as are low-income areas in Africa and Asia. Kahn found that the quality and quantity of natural shocks is roughly the same in poorer and richer countries. Yet Cavallo and Noy (2010 p. 11) show that the overwhelming majority of people affected and killed by natural disasters reside in developing countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region: 96 percent of the people killed and 99 percent of the people affected by natural disasters over the period 1970-2008 were in the Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region [the collective population share of these three areas is roughly 75 percent of the global population]. Stromberg phrases it this way: disaster-related deaths per capita are four times higher in low-income countries than high-income countries (Stromberg, 2007 p. 206).

A recent pertinent example is the damage that the recent 2010 earthquakes wrought in Haiti and Chile. The January 2010 earthquake that hit Haiti's densely settled capital, Port-au-Prince, caused substantial loss of human life (between 200,000 and 250,000 fatalities), the dislocation of hundreds of thousands more and devastation of the country's economic infrastructure (assessed to be over 100 percent of the country's GDP). In contrast, the February 2010 earthquake in Chile – which was a physically stronger quake and also struck a densely populated area – caused significantly fewer fatalities (less than 1000 people killed according to official estimates as of May 2010). For Chile, although the direct economic costs are expected to be substantial due to the amount of wealth exposed, they are anticipated to be far less than Haiti's in relation to the size of the economy (Cavallo and Noy, 2010 p. 7).

This trend may also be evident on a local level, with richer and/or more influential people being shielded from the effects of a calamity despite living in geographical proximity to those who are suffering from the disaster. Cuny (1983) argues that few provincial or national leaders are affected by disasters as their standard of living is rarely vulnerable to such adversities. Kahn (2005b) maintains that wealthy people can afford to live in more secure communities, and are more likely to be informed of and able to process and respond to information forewarning them about upcoming natural shocks. Poorer people, on the other hand, are more likely to live in disaster-prone areas [where land is cheaper] and to live and work in structures that are unlikely to withstand the shock. The poor living in informal settlements may not be able to benefit from government regulatory and zoning codes.

Cuny's work also draws attention to the point that the impact of a disaster is influenced by the strength of the victim. During an emergency, people must leave their jobs and devote time to disaster-related responses, which severely curtails the normal economic activity of the area. Routine activities can usually be resumed reasonably quickly in most mid to large businesses and organisations, if perhaps only at a reduced output. However, small businesses and individuals who were already on the fringes of society feel the real trauma of a disaster. For many smaller enterprises, a disaster can quickly destroy produce, production assets, investments and savings, making recovery virtually impossible. This is intensified when the individuals or organizations are not connected to formal banking institutions and/or insurance arrangements.

5.1.e Impact can be lessened by appropriate ex-ante / ex-post engagement

The Joseph narrative is a fruitful illustration that the impact of a disaster is related to adequate planning and response. As we have already seen in section 2.3.a., Joseph is made aware of the oncoming seven years of abundance that would be followed by seven years of famine [Genesis 41:25-32]. Given the looming prospect of disaster, Joseph instructs Pharaoh to act decisively to prepare a reserve of food that will prevent the people from completely perishing during the famine [41:33-36]. In this situation, Joseph is taking care to minimize the effect of a disaster. In acting decisively and swiftly following the onset of the famine [by mobilizing the population and ensuring access to food stores], we see that Joseph paid adequate attention to his dependents [the civilian population], and consequently alleviated the potential widespread impact. The end result was that lives were saved [Genesis 47:25]. In his wisdom Joseph acted responsibly and averted the worst of a disaster. His actions pre- and post- disaster successfully countered the worst of the famine's potential impact.

This kind of thinking by Joseph should be considered superlative for its time. Asmita Tiwari, a development practitioner in the fields of disaster risk management, international development, urban development and environmental management, notes that only at the turn of the twentieth century did an appreciation for the need for preventative measures become widespread – and this was in response to the growing economic and social costs that disasters were causing in this richer and more densely populated world (Tiwari, 2015 p. 53). This required a new way of thinking: one that focused on the *ex-ante* [before it happens, or whilst it is still a just a hazard] elements, rather than just reacting to a disaster *ex-post* [once it occurs and becomes a disaster].

This is a key underlying theme in Cuny's work: disasters are rarely completely unforeseen events, and that with preparation much can be done to substantially reduce their impact (Cuny, 1983 p. 204). Cuny agrees with fellow disaster specialist Frederick Krimgold, who summarized the issue of disasters succinctly:

The stated goals of disaster relief are the reduction of human suffering, the improvement of material well-being, and the increase of personal security. It goes without saying that these goals are best served if disaster, in the first place, can be avoided or reduced... if we refer to the definition of disaster in terms for the need for "outside" help, we may describe the goal of pre-disaster planning as the creation of self-sufficiency... (Krimgold, 1974).

Cuny unpacks this idea of avoiding or reducing the impact of a disaster by speaking of three types of activities: *prevention*, or attempting to completely remove the threat – such as the building of a dam to prevent flooding; *mitigation*, or attempting to minimize the disruptive effect, and; *preparedness*, attempting to plan an effective response for the disaster once it has occurred (Cuny, 1983 p. 205). In general, complete prevention is frequently seen to be the most costly and least-effective measure, especially when dealing with large-scale hazards. Mitigation has also proved to be difficult, particularly in areas of underdevelopment or where governing authorities have failed to provide suitable interventions such as building regulations or zoning protocols. Cuny sees that preparedness is, in these instances, potentially the most effective method of reducing a disaster. It can typically be achieved with little or no external help or additional resources, and though in itself preparedness does not promote development [as mitigation does], it can save lives and reduce suffering.

In a study of economic resilience of businesses to both natural and man-made disasters, Adam Rose⁶⁰ concurred with our proposal. He bemoaned the much-overlooked fact that, in his eyes, individuals, institutions and communities have a profound ability to ‘deflect, withstand and rebound’ from serious shock, both as a matter of course in their ordinary activities and through resourcefulness and resolve in the face of crisis (Rose, 2007 p. 383). In his estimation, Rose also saw a definite need to distinguish between mitigation [reducing the probability that a disaster will occur] and resilience [reducing the consequences once it has occurred]. He then also differentiates static resilience, which is making the best of the existing available resources to maintain necessary function, and dynamic resilience, a more complex process that involves the ongoing repair and reconstruction for long-term stability (p. 384).

5.1.f Proposal: Disaster ‘by negligence’ and ‘by neglect’

Wright’s observation was that Natural Causes – ‘the result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason’ – were a fundamental cause of poverty. However, from an extended look at the biblical literature, the Brazilian surveys and the disaster research, we have reached the conclusion that “natural” is misguided and “no reason” is similarly erroneous. Rather, we agree with the thought-line of Keller (2010 p. 38) who believed that ‘Natural Causes’ should be rephrased, and

⁶⁰ Adam Rose is a Research Professor in the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, and Coordinator for Economics at USC’s Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE).

instead we chose to identify this reason for poverty to be 'disaster'.⁶¹ This takes into consideration our concern with the "naturalness" of these events: were they all unpredictable acts of nature, or were they caused by underlying but possibly foreseeable causes? This also takes into consideration the data that shows that the actual event is not the primary concern, but rather its impact on people.

Secondly, we propose the addition of two subthemes: *of negligence* and *of neglect*. In English law, 'negligence' largely refers to a situation where reasonable care has not been taken to avoid acts or omissions that it can be reasonably foreseen may cause harm to another person (Oliphant, 2010). Likewise, 'neglect' refers to a situation of gross failure to provide adequate attention to someone in a dependent position and who cannot provide for himself (Matthews, 2010). Whilst we are not concerned with the exact legal implications, we find the ideas very interesting.

We therefore propose that Wright's 'Natural Causes' should be renamed 'Disasters: ongoing suffering as the result of an event that has caused great and often sudden adversity or distress', with the following two subthemes:

1. *Disaster of negligence*: disasters where the impact is heightened because of a lack of forethought or prudence.
2. *Disaster of neglect*: disasters where the impact is heightened because of an inadequate response and rehabilitation.

It would seem that there is a strong base to support our proposal. We believe that this definition of disaster as a cause of poverty remains faithful to the biblical literature, the World Bank data, and contemporary scholarship, and is an accurate expression of one of the three universal causes of poverty.

⁶¹ EMDAT – the database of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, located in Brussels – describes a disaster as a 'situation or event, which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to national or international level for external assistance... an unforeseen and often sudden event that causes great damage, destruction and human suffering. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins' (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2009).

5.2 Laziness: key principles

5.2.a Laziness/immorality can be a precursor to poverty

It would seem that most interpretations of the Bible would agree with Wright that laziness *is* likely to be correlated to poverty, at least to a degree. One conventional, albeit conservative, Jewish interpretation of the Torah understands the poor to have very real obligations to avoid poverty: each person is expected to always strive to provide for himself or herself. Rabbi Elliott Dorff, Professor in Philosophy at the American Jewish University, explains that the Jewish expectation towards labour was unpretentious: one should 'love work and hate lordship' (Dorff, 2004 p. 148) and any Jew found to be content with the act of begging for their living was considered somewhat a disgrace. Those found in such a position were expected to work diligently to earn themselves out of poverty. Furthermore, whilst they were not expected to sell their homes or tools [their basis of security and productivity], they were expected to sell any luxury goods in good faith in order to become independent of public funds. Thus, the understanding of personal responsibility with regards to poverty-avoidance should be considered very entrenched in the psyche of the Hebrew people.

Finding systematic, non-subjective support for the idea of failure through laziness is often problematic. As we have seen, it is largely absent from the MA, CA, SE and PM literature [though early MA proponents such as Booth and Rowntree have cited it in their reasons for poverty]. Yet it is an important distinction: social psychologist Bernard Weiner⁶² states: 'Without question, individuals who fail because of a lack of effort are evaluated more negatively than those who fail because of a lack of ability' (Weiner, 1993 p. 959). We have also seen from the MA that laziness or personal immorality is often viewed as a precursor to poverty. Terrie E. Moffitt⁶³, Richie Poulton, and Avshalom Caspi have conducted perhaps the most significant – and recent – research into the correlation of an immoral attitude towards well-being (Moffitt et al., 2013). Looking to determine whether self-control [used here as the inverse proxy for laziness] in childhood was correlated with adult well-being, the researchers conducted a longitudinal research program examining the psychological and physical well-being of a group of 1,000 people born in 1972 and 1973 in Dunedin, New Zealand. Over the course of 38 years, the participants were physically and psychologically

⁶² Bernard Weiner is a Distinguished Research Professor in Social Psychology at University of California, Los Angeles. He is known for developing a form of attribution theory, which explains the emotional and motivational entailments of academic success and failure.

⁶³ Terrie E. Moffitt and Avshalom Caspi are professors in the departments of psychology and neuroscience, and psychiatry and behavioural science, at Duke University and at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London. Richie Poulton is director of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit at the Dunedin School of Medicine in New Zealand.

examined 12 times: at birth and then at ages 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 18, 21, 26, 32 and 38. The results of this study are informative for us: 'Children who showed early difficulty with self-control grew up to have poorer health, greater substance abuse, more financial difficulties, higher crime conviction rates, and lower parenting skill, even after controlling for the effects of IQ, social class, and sex' (p. 355). To test the validity of their conclusions, the authors conducted a study on non-identical twins. Their results indicated that the 5-year old sibling with poorer self-control was 'significantly more likely as a 12-year-old to begin smoking [a precursor of poor adult health], perform poorly in school [a precursor of adult poverty], and engage in antisocial conduct problems such as stealing and fighting [a precursor of adult crime]' (p. 357).⁶⁴ It is therefore likely that laziness is correlated with poverty, but the difficulties in quantifying the extent remain.

5.2.b Laziness/immorality as a chief cause of poverty may be overstated

The data from the World Bank research barely supported the idea of Laziness as a precursor to poverty: only 4 of the 306 references [1.3 per cent] spoke of some form of personal indolence or lack of self-discipline. As we have seen, three of the four subthemes [Debt, Gambling and Lack of Consciousness] were offered during group discussions. The final subtheme was offered during an interview with the president of a community, who felt that 'extravagance, in which people do not think about the next day' was a significant cause of poverty in his community. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we saw that not one comment in Laziness was self-referential – all mentions focused on the laziness of others. The fact that people do not comment on their own personal immorality as a cause of poverty would suggest that they either do not perceive it is a cause or they are unwilling to admit to such a subjective fault.

However, it could be argued that this is due to the notion of self-deception, which Alfred Mele, Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University, describes as 'a tendency to believe propositions that we want to be true even when an impartial investigation of readily available data would indicate that they are probably false' (Mele, 2001 p. 15). Self-deception may become even more plausible when correlating laziness with poverty: evidence from University of Washington social psychologist, Jonathan D. Brown, shows that beliefs about our own traits may become 'more biased when the trait is highly desirable or undesirable' (Brown and Dutton, 1995 p. 1290). We therefore recognize

⁶⁴ Angela Duckworth [University of Pennsylvania] and James J. Gross [Stanford] wanted to build upon Moffitt et al.'s findings. They concur that self-control is pivotal, but that an additional character trait necessary for success is 'grit', which is not just the ability to refrain from temptation, but also the ability to find novel approaches to overcome setback. Although this could be of interest to our argument, the authors conclude that research in this field is very much in its infancy and that more empirical work needs to be done. See DUCKWORTH, A. & GROSS, J. J. 2014. Self-control and grit: related but separable determinants of success. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23, 319-325.

that it is a limitation of our data that we cannot explore or probe this issue of self-referencing laziness further [and we have found the literature to be disappointingly sparse also].

It is also worth commenting on the other areas of “personal moral failure” that Keller linked with laziness (Keller, 2010 p. 38), and that was referenced in Proverbs: that of intemperance [Proverbs 20:13; 21:17; 23:21]. Writing for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and using data from the UK, Harkness et al. (2012) ventured to provide a comprehensive review of the causes of poverty, including addiction and debt. Their review found little evidence of drug and alcohol misuse among people in poverty: Hay et al. (2008), and Hay et al. (2010) estimated that just over 250,000 of those that are in receipt of out-of-work benefits are problem drug users, and around 160,000 claimants are likely to be dependent drinkers: a seemingly large sum until recognized that it accounts for just 7 per cent and 4 per cent of those receiving benefits respectively. Similarly, when looking at alcohol consumption, the British Medical Association (BMA, 2008) actually reports the opposite trend: those in paid work drink more than those who are unemployed and average consumption actually rises with income. Likewise, Marmot (1997) presents evidence that shows lower levels of heavy alcohol consumption among the unemployed than the employed – with the highest prevalence among those in professional and managerial occupations. His conclusion is that the survey evidence does not ‘lend support to the popular conception that it is the poor and unemployed who are disproportionately represented among heavy drinkers’ (p. S16). This literature shows the problem of addiction, while possible, is actually reasonably uncommon among those that are in poverty.

5.2.c Laziness as a chief cause of poverty may be a cultural perception

While we do not outright reject the idea of laziness, we see that perhaps this idea is over-emphasized both in the biblical literature – particularly the book of Proverbs, which was Wright’s only cited text – and also the cultural lens through which we engage with the text. We have already stated our preference for the prominence of the poor’s voice in matters regarding poverty – as we discussed in detail in section 3.5: Participatory Methods. Yet by its very nature, Proverbs violates this and loudly echoes the type of ‘universal, reductionist, standardized and stable’ views of the top-down, professional declarations on poverty that so grieved both Chambers [p. 144] and us. We see a clue to the proverbial authors’ understanding of poverty when we examine the language used to identify, and respond to the plight of, the poor: in Proverbs, the ‘poor’ was typically seen as an individual person who could be given direct, personal alms to alleviate his or her condition; the

'poor' were not, however, ever seen as an interlinked group of people who were being systematically exploited by the powerful [who, in this case may have been, indirectly, the authors' peers themselves]. In a significant diversion from the writings of Job, Jeremiah and Amos, the Proverbs barely suggest anything beyond charity in order to remedy poverty [cf. Proverbs 14:21; 31:20]. This is in strong contrast to the prophets, who recognized the poor can be victims, and thus protested the socioeconomic structures, calling for a measure of social justice or reformation to prevent the social vices that first lead to poverty. The Hebrew words used for 'poor' also show a bias towards words that pertain to individual responsibility that is not as evident in the historical prophetic writings. The use of *מִקְסוֹר* and *יָרֵשׁ* – words that relate to dispossession of wealth due to immorality or sin – is a prominent feature. Whilst poverty as an individual blight is a thematic in the proverbial literature, it is virtually non-existent outside of this writing.

We see that perhaps it is not surprising that our current cultural lens also leads us to see laziness to have such a prominent connection with poverty. To a large extent, we can see these beliefs entrenched in the mind-set of many contemporary, Western, capitalist societies – of which Wright, Keller, Booth and Rowntree [and admittedly, ourselves] are products. Smith and Stone (1989), both sociologists⁶⁵ who work in the field of social stratification, found that the prominent ideology in much of the West is that individuals themselves are ultimately culpable for their standing in systems of economic imbalance.⁶⁶ Exploring the beliefs that industriousness generates wealth, and indolence results in poverty, Smith and Stone (1989) examined the leading metatheories about the causes of wealth and poverty [in the USA], and demonstrated that the prevailing conviction in American culture at the time was that of 'Individualism', or the belief that laziness, lack of thrift and 'loose' morals are the primary causes of poverty, thus the poor are individually responsible for their own wretched plight. The authors report:

In capitalism, opportunities are readily available to all who are willing to work hard, and socioeconomic mobility and standing hinge on the possession and expression of

⁶⁵ Kevin B. Smith is a political science professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is also co-director of the UNL Political Psychophysiology Lab and resident faculty at UNL's Center for Brain, Biology and Behavior.

⁶⁶ In one sense, we recognize this can be traced back to the early roots of Western society and the influence of the Protestant tradition. David W Miller, a Protestant theologian and ethicist at Princeton University, reports that ascetic Protestantism was the prevailing message preached by the Puritan and Calvinistic communities during America's early colonial days. This theology taught that wealth was a sign of God's providence and an indication that the holder was a part of God's elect, thus hard work and frugality were aspired to as a sign of righteousness. Meanwhile, indolence and indulgence were logically associated with immorality, which was suitably symbolised by poverty. See: MILLER, D. W. 2007. *Wealth creation as integrated with faith: a Protestant reflection. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish views on the creation of wealth*. Hesburgh Center Auditorium.

acquired personality characteristics such as drives, skills and motives. Moreover, the logic continues, because virtually all people have the opportunity to acquire and develop these traits, those who do are justly rewarded with wealth, whereas those who do not are deservedly penalized with poverty (Smith and Stone, 1989 p. 94).

Smith and Stone's second theory of 'Culturalism' is also of particular interest to our interpretation of Proverbs, as it describes the process whereby the social structures and situations that mark the wealthy and poor become 'mutually reinforcing products of self-perpetuating, adaptive ways of life' (Smith and Stone, 1989 p. 94). In practical terms, this means that the personality traits of the wealthy produce social structures and situations that reinforce these traits for them – and for their future generations. Hard work for the wealthy succeeds because their created environment rewards industriousness. However the same process, but with inverse consequences, operates for the poor: conscientious work may not necessarily be rewarded with achievement, because the social structures of the poor's influencing environment do not necessarily provide the same reward.

Could it be that for the wise [educated] writers of the Proverbs, apportioning blame upon the poor individual was a subtle outworking of Smith and Stone's observations of individualism and/or culturalism? As the ones who held the power in the community, it is likely that they were unfamiliar with any circumstances where work and discipline *simply would not* result in favourable progress. Is it feasible that the author's privileged position in the social strata of Israel's landscape inadvertently and adversely influenced their perception of what it takes to generate wealth or, conversely, succumb to a life of destitution? Therefore, for the authors of Proverbs it may seem fitting to associate positive personality traits with success and negative personality traits with failure – but we ask whether they showed an ignorance of the favourable social circumstances they enjoyed which almost certainly played a significant role in their accomplishments.

5.2.d Unable to work is more significant than *unwilling* to work

We have already made mention of the complete lack of reference to education and employment in Wright's model. Yet this is not entirely unexpected, as in the ancient land-based economy, "employment" would have been unnecessary as a separate feature of life: each family provided for themselves without the need to engage in work for an income which would then be traded for the necessities of life. Nor would we expect to see any reference to formal education in the biblical text. Aside from parental training in matters of daily and spiritual life, education was largely unknown and

unnecessary in the ANE (Crenshaw, 1985 p. 614), and certainly not a prerequisite for a productive “career” or the helpful protection from poverty as it would seem today (Lutz, 2009 p. 3038).⁶⁷

However, this does not presume that the ability and opportunity to work productively is irrelevant to our conversation. When we extended our World Bank query beyond laziness to include references to income/expenditure ratio, skills, education or employment – references to people not being *able* to productively work, rather than not being *willing* to productively work – we saw an additional 101 references out of a total of 306, including 30 for unemployment, 17 for childhood labour, 16 for a lack of educational opportunities and 12 for underemployment. 15 references to employment with a low income have also been placed in this subtheme. This represents an astonishing 33 per cent of the references. This indicates the very real scenarios where a person cannot adequately gain the income he or she needs to survive in the community that he or she is living in, despite likely having a desire to work and support themselves.

This failure could be in the form of unemployment: a 39-year-old male from Novo Horizonte stated ‘there are many people that has no place to find a job... this is the main problem here... it contributes too much for a bad quality of life here ... almost everyone here is in this situation...’. This failure could also be in the form of underemployment: ‘Many in the community live without a regular job, and there are many who “get a bit here and a bit there, but, that don’t have any secure work because regular work is very difficult in the city”’ was the opinion of a 26-year-old man from Nova California. Many respondents recognized that their ability to draw a reasonable income was interconnected with both the success and the qualifications of those around them. A 43-year-old man from Vila Junqueira saw his income rise and fall with the prosperity of his customers:

‘All of my customers are friends, nearly no people from other places. The business have fallen a lot, because of this unemployment wave. I used to sell 250 beers in a weekend, today it is barely 50. 150 hot-dogs before, now just around 50. It is the crisis.’

⁶⁷ A voluminous study by Lutz used educational attainment data from 120 countries, segregated by age and sex, and analyzed alongside national economic growth. From his findings, Lutz contends that there is now unmistakable statistical proof (based on econometric models) that education is a consistently important determinant of a country’s collective level of economic growth. He continues by saying: ‘For poor countries with low human capital, only the combination of universal primary education with broadly based secondary education results in the kind of rapid economic growth that has the potential to push countries out of poverty... (and) while education is not always a sufficient condition to growth, it can be considered a necessary one, at least in the longer run.’ See p. 3038 of LUTZ, W. 2009. *Sola schola et sanitas: human capital as the root cause and priority for international development? Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 364, 3031-3047.

A young man from Padre Jordano recognized that his situation was worsened by the fact that he did not hold a university degree, but was competing for jobs against those who did: 'They [sic] only way is to study...the money I earn at the store, I am saving to continue to study.'

The idea of poverty due to a failure in ability to adequately produce is well documented in the MA and CA literature (specifically Sen, 1999, and Sachs, 2006) and has already been discussed. A few necessary comments should be made, however, as we see that an inhibited opportunity for productivity is clearly evident in the idea of Sach's poverty traps. In particular, the 'physical geography trap' presented by Sachs (2006 pp. 57-59) – where countries that are located in arid conditions with low agricultural productivity, or those consisting mostly of mountainous regions that are unfavourable to the development of rail transportation – is a representation of poverty caused by simply a failure to be productive.

Jalan and Ravallion sought to test this hypothesis: that people caught in unproductive circumstances were more susceptible to poverty than otherwise identical households located in productive areas (Jalan and Ravallion, 2002). Basing their empirical work in post-reform rural China and using data from 5600 farm households gathered between 1985-1990, they concluded that there was 'robust' evidence of the existence of geographic poverty traps: living in mountainous areas, for instance, correlates with increased expenditure yet lower return on agriculture, and decreased road density – all associated with lower consumption rates [consumption being used as the proxy for poverty in this study].

The impact of the right aptitude for work is also well documented in the wider literature, beginning perhaps with Robert Solow's⁶⁸ observations in his highly influential piece on productivity output in the United States between 1909-1949 (Solow, 1957). Solow argued that fruitful work was not just influenced by having a desire and opportunity to work, but also having access to tools that maximize the worker's input-output ratio. Noting that output per worker had approximately doubled in the forty year period, he calculated that only one-eighth of the increase could be attributed to an increase in capital intensity, whereas an astounding seven-eighths of the increase could be credited to

⁶⁸ Robert Solow's academic work is connected with Harvard University, Colombia University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His influential work in economics earned him the American Economic Association's John Bates Clark Award (1961), the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences (1987) and the National Medal of Science (1999).

technical change and innovation (p. 316). This shows that having access to the right tools and resources can be a huge advantage in increasing productivity – or conversely, in reducing failure. This initial finding is seen as providing an early inspiration for Solow's model, which has become an important voice in the studies of economic growth and the development literature (see Stiglitz, 1990).

5.2.e Proposal: Failure 'by immoral attitude' and 'by insufficient aptitude'

Considering all of this, we would like to revisit the issue of 'laziness' as a primary cause of poverty. It is our instinct that this is not fully supported by our triangulation. Stirred by the awareness that personality traits *and* situations fuse to form either positive or negative opportunities for wealth creation, we see that 'laziness' could be revised to read simply 'failure: the inability to be engaged in fruitful work conducive to meeting one's needs' – with two sub-clauses that take into account instances where individuals do not have the moral inclination towards work, and instances where they do not have effective command over the resources that would ensure their work would be fruitful. Simply put, we suggest 'failure' to constitute an *immoral attitude* and/or an *insufficient aptitude*. We understand aptitude in its most original sense: that of being 'fit for purpose.' Aptitude should be regarded as having the sufficient knowledge, skills, tools, technology and physical resources to render one fit for productive work that was intended for the first humans.⁶⁹

We therefore propose to change the theme 'Laziness' to become 'Failure: the inability to be engaged in fruitful work conducive to meeting one's needs' and we propose two subthemes:

1. *Failure due to immoral attitude*: a moral stance averse to the discipline required for success, including but not limited to laziness and indolence; substance abuse and destructive addiction.
2. *Failure due to insufficient aptitude*: a lack of access to sufficient knowledge, skills, tools, technology and physical resources to render one fit for productive work. Also, a lack of suitable connection between what the individual has to offer the community and what the community is willing and able to purchase.

⁶⁹ Adam Smith saw the need for people to be adequately productive to avoid poverty, and he based his assumption in both ethical (p. 90) and economic grounds: 'A man must always be able to live by his work, and his wages must be at least sufficient to maintain him. They must even upon most occasions be somewhat more; otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen could not last beyond the first generation.' See p. 77 of SMITH, A. 2000b. *The wealth of nations*, New York, Modern Library.

We see that this proposal is reinforced by the World Bank data, faithful to broader biblical interpretation, supported by the wider research and is an accurate expression of one of the three universal causes of poverty.

5.3 Oppression: key principles

5.3.a Oppression is a critical precursor to poverty

It is clear that the Bible supports a clear correlation between oppression and poverty, and that this root should be afforded the most focus. The Hebrew language even had a specific word for those who were experiencing poverty due to the oppression of others: the עֲנִי. In the historical writings we see God strongly urging His people not to take advantage of those less powerful, but by the time of the prophets it seems apparent that the words had escalated from a directive to a comprehensive rebuke. It is possible that during the earlier times of Israel's history, economic resource was largely shared evenly throughout the community. Individual poverty and misery were unknown in the early family structure of Israel [for production and provision were a function of the community as a whole] and whilst there may have been rich and poor, it is unlikely that the difference between the two would have been great (this observation has been explored by Gerstenberger, 2004, Wallis, 2010, Epsztein, 1986).

However, as Israel developed, grew and prospered, inequality likewise grew. Economic policies and the tax system of the Persian Empire are likely to have hastened the disbanding of the household links that had previously somewhat resisted such vulnerability. Wallis (2010) perceives a correlation between great material prosperity for some, yet hardship for others [as shown by archaeological records], and the arrival of the prophets, who were raised up to rally against the disparities (see also Hay, 1989 p. 41). If we are to take this as accurate, this might offer insight into why God's instructions of the Pentateuch were largely instructive, whilst His words via the prophets were scornfully admonishing. It seems that in the early years, the guidance focused on, 'If poverty comes, do not make it worse' whereas as the success of the nation gathered momentum, it moved towards 'There is poverty because of your greed'.

The World Bank data also supported the idea that poverty is frequently caused by the oppressive actions of those in power. We found that of 306 references to poverty, 120 [39%] concerned the

abuse of power by a stronger party. Interestingly, the most pressing observation regarding a power imbalance between the poor and the rich was the lack of attention they were given by public officials: there were 17 references to the 'disinterest' of politicians and authorities. Some interviewees commented on the disrespectful treatment they receive at health clinics and police stations. Others referred to the less discreet practice of politicians feigning interest in the needs of the poor prior to elections – only to ignore them once in office.

Interestingly, the direct exploitation of the poor by the rich and/or powerful was not a large feature in the responses, but did surface a small number of times. Reminiscent of Jehoiakim's oppressive reign [Jeremiah 22:13], one man in Santo André grieved the confiscation of his savings by the president of Brazil:

We thought about buying a lot, a good one with paved streets, electricity, really nice. I had the money, but President Collor⁷⁰ confiscated it and I could get only 50,000 out of the account.

In a modern version of Amos 5, another young man in Santo André believed that there was a conscious abuse of power in the political and judicial realms of his community. He stated that his dream was to become a judge and reverse this trend:

But I dream of being a judge. In a favela you see that people in Brazil have no idea of their rights. We have Police discrimination, the politicians abuse and use their knowledge to take advantage of those that have not this knowledge. So I want to know the rights and the obligations.

These comments – where a more powerful party takes deliberate actions to disadvantage the poor – are directly supportive of Wright's idea of oppression.

However, it is surprisingly difficult to say with confidence that secular scholarship supports a distinct link between oppression and poverty, for it is noticeably sparse in the MA, CA, SE or PM literature. Contemporary literature may speak frequently of 'corruption', 'inequality' or 'injustice', but rarely does a writer outwardly use the term 'oppression'. The former terms, in our opinion, do not

⁷⁰ Fernando Collor de Mello served as president of Brazil from 1990-92. He was accused of corruption and resigned from office in 1992. He was subsequently convicted and barred from holding public office for a period of 8 years. See 2013. "Fernando Collor de Mello". In: THE EDITORS OF ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA (ed.) *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Online Edition ed.

adequately reflect the motivation and agency involved by the more powerful party in perpetuating poverty.

Peter Boone, of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics and Political Science, sought to provide quantitative links between poverty and oppression by presenting an ambitious dynamic model of oppression and then conducting a number of empirical tests (Boone, 1996).⁷¹ Boone used 40 different categories of human rights that are considered to be signals of regimes that are oppressive on the basis of gender, political rights or ethnicity (p. 3). Boone's findings led him to conclude that oppression is a key cause of poor human development indicators (p. 4) and also poverty (p. 34), suggesting that 'poverty can be sharply reduced if oppression is directly addressed' (p. 35). His results showed that oppression lasts longer in situations where oppressors can find sufficient funding: where natural resource revenue is high, foreign aid is unconditional and family assets can be taxed and/or extracted easily (p. 15). He also showed that oppressive regimes tend to have a low provision of centralized goods [such as education and health care] as these goods require finance to provide and may be seen as strengthening those the regime is trying to oppress (pp. 16-17).

Though not directly stating oppression, Susan Rose-Ackerman, Professor of Jurisprudence at Yale University, agrees that corruption [occurring wherever 'private wealth and public power overlap', be they 'low-level opportunistic pay-offs' or systematic corruption] is one of the most pressing issues facing the world (Rose-Ackerman, 2007 p. 229). She cites World Bank research that indicates up to US \$1 trillion is moved each year in bribery funds, with high levels of corruption being associated with lower levels of investment and growth, less direct foreign investment and a decrease in assumed political legitimacy [thus higher tax avoidance].

In addition to the impact on the individual victim of repression, she argues that corruption has far-reaching and negative consequences that are particularly uncondusive to a prosperous economy. Highly corrupt governments are also associated with lower education spending as well as interference with programs designed to help their poor (p. 232). In this way, corruption can certainly be seen as a cause of individual and societal poverty. Easterly agrees with Rose-Ackerman. Whilst

⁷¹ Though Boone's work itself is reasonably inconspicuous, it has been cited favourably by Harvard University's RJ Barrow and New York University's W Easterly. See BARRO, R. J. 1999. Determinants of democracy. *Journal of Political Economy*, 107, 158-183, EASTERLY, W. 1999. Life during growth. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 4, 239-276.

he acknowledges that the corruption debate is still 'hotly debated', he maintains that it 'seems foolhardy to simply dismiss corruption as a factor inhibiting development' (Easterly, 2006a p. 101).

5.3.b Oppression may occur in the form of abandonment

Whilst the biblical literature is reasonably clear in denouncing the powerful when they purposefully exploit the weak, we also see that it is the responsibility of the powerful to interrupt the downward spiral of poverty in the weak. Not only are the powerful expected to refrain from abandoning the poor economically, but they are also expected to refrain from abandoning the poor socially. An interesting observation of SE addressed in the Old Testament is the expectation to include the poor in the civic and religious life of the wider community. We remember those who were referred to as the לָלוּ. Though not in desperate poverty, these unfortunate individuals had limited means at their disposal and they were frequently restricted from full civic participation due to the costs involved [cf. Leviticus 14:21-22]. Though they were not expected to provide charity or alms to the לָלוּ, the Israelites were directed to ensure that they were able to fully participate in the activities of their society, and were charged with lowering the barriers to entry for these 'normal activities of citizens' (cf. Burchardt et al., 1999 p. 231).

Likewise, Rodd also appreciated this when he saw that the duties of a king were to execute justice for the poor, deliver the oppressed and see that no wrong was done to resident foreigners, orphans or widows [citing Psalm 72; Jeremiah 21:11-12; 22:3]. He notes that the active involvement of the king in improving the economic well-being of the poor was not restricted to Israel's kings, but was also a feature of other ANE societies including Ur-Nammu and Hammurabi (Rodd, 2000 pp. 297-298). In a vein similar to the 'sin of omission' of James 4:17, the act of refusing to come to the assistance of the poorer members of the community [and refusing to provide them with the same level of infrastructure as the richer sectors] should also rightly be seen as an act of oppression on par with more purposeful and flagrant acts of oppressive abuse.

This form of oppression was subtly referenced in the World Bank data, and the recurring theme of the absent infrastructure that the residents believed should be provided by the government. The absence of public services was frequently mentioned in the interviews: the lack of sewage and sanitation systems, a clean and dependable water supply, consistent delivery of electricity, garbage

removal services, accessible health care, street paving and reliable public transport services were noted alongside a lack of police presence and protection as being associated with the onset and continuance of poverty.

5.3.c Oppression permeates society and perpetuates poverty

The biblical authors are quick to recognize that economic oppression does not act independently from the other spheres of society. The prophet Amos condemns the Israelites for not only oppressing the poor [Amos 4:1], but simultaneously longing for the demise of the poor [2:7], engaging in religious prostitution [2:7], silencing God's messengers [2:12], hating those who try to judge legal cases fairly [5:10], abhorring those who defend the innocent [5:10], extortion of the poor [5:11], encouraging bribery [5:12], remaining silent while evil happens [5:13], acting hypocritically religious [5:16, 21-22] and buying slaves [8:6]. The root sin that permits oppression to flourish unchecked seemingly accepts a multitude of social depravities.

In the World Bank data, we see that oppression is similarly multidimensional. Interviewees observed that the wealthy voluntarily segregate themselves from the poorer community, government officials openly stole money from citizens, politicians use their positions of power to take advantage of civilians, and large businesses act monopolistically.

Perhaps the most significant economics writer to equate oppression with general social division has been Joseph Stiglitz, professor of economics at Colombia University, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences [2001] and a former senior vice president and chief economist of the World Bank. Stiglitz's major contribution to our discussion can be found in *The price of inequality: how today's divided society endangers our future* (Stiglitz, 2012), in which he argues that increasing economic inequalities in the USA are leading to an increasingly divided society (pp. 9-11), a crippling of real growth (p. 8) and fostering economic insecurity and poverty for the poorest of Americans (pp. 15-17, 19-21). Though a discussion about inequality would be to go over well-established ground in the economic literature,⁷² it is Stiglitz's recognition of the underpinning

⁷² Thomas Piketty's magnum opus, *Capital in the 21st century*, emphasizes the distortions in wealth concentrations and distribution over the past 250 years, arguing that the rate of capital return in developed countries is persistently greater than the rate of economic growth, and that this will cause wealth inequality to increase in the future.

His primary argument is that inequality does not happen by chance, but rather it is an inherent feature of capitalism, and can only be addressed through external regulation. Piketty bases his reasoning on a formula that relates the rate of return on capital (r) to the rate of economic growth (g), where r includes dividends, profits, rents, interest and other income from capital; and g is measured in income or output. He contends that, when the rate of growth is low, then wealth tends to build

[im]moralities behind wealth creation and distribution that most connects with our proposal. Unlike many economists, who seemingly enter the political landscape to advocate a minimal state and a laissez faire market, Stiglitz mediates for managed capitalism and heightened democracy.

Stiglitz's primary concern with rising inequality is the way in which it develops. He argues that the increase in wealth at the top of society has largely come from the activity of rent-seeking (Stiglitz, 2012 p. 39), whereby the moneyed classes increase their affluence by manipulating the social or political environment in which economic activities occur, *extracting* rather than *creating* new wealth. This frequently occurs in the form of lavish government contracts, advantageous extraction rights for natural resources, and wooing regulatory powers to safeguard anti-competitive behaviour in markets against challenges. Stiglitz writes: 'One of the ways that those at the top make money is by taking advantage of their market and political power to favour themselves, to increase their own income, at the expense of the rest' (p. 45), including the 'egregious' practice of taking advantage of the poor and uninformed by 'preying upon these groups with predatory lending and abusive credit card practices' (p. 46).

Stiglitz is highly critical of the many abuses of power by the wealthy sets, which he views as frequently manipulative and coercive in their political and business dealings:

Our political system has increasingly been working in ways that increase the inequality of outcomes and reduce equality of opportunity. This should not come as a surprise: we have a political system that gives inordinate power to those at the top, and they have used that power not only to limit the extent of redistribution but also to shape the rules of the game in their favour, and to extract from the public what can only be called large "gifts" (Stiglitz, 2012 p. 39).

Beyond just the economic injustices, Stiglitz sees an increasingly unjust legal system, whereby the system can be manipulated in order for the wealthy – be it individuals or corporations – to escape

more quickly from r than from labour and tends to accumulate more among the top 10 per cent and 1 per cent, increasing inequality. Thus, according to Piketty, the underlying force for wealth inequality can be summed up in the equation $r > g$ [pp. 25-27].

However, a major observation in Piketty's work – and the reason why we do not afford it more space here – is that he states boldly that inequality is a major concern, but does not say why. In the words of Crook, Piketty '...wants you to worry about low growth in the coming decades not because that would mean a slower rise in living standards, but because it might cause the ratio of capital to output to rise, which would worsen inequality...' The concern of our thesis is not inequality *per se*, but oppression. Along with Stiglitz, we are interested less in the amount of wealth difference, and more in any unjust methods that led to the wealth difference or any unjust measures that are fuelled by the wealth difference.

See PIKETTY, T. 2014. *Capital in the twenty-first century*, Cambridge MA, Belknap Press. See also CROOK, C. 2014. *The most important book ever is all wrong* [Online]. New York: Bloomberg. Available: <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-04-20/the-most-important-book-ever-is-all-wrong> [Accessed 07 April 2015].

the full consequences of their actions: banks frequently reoffend as the cost of being found guilty is significantly less than the profit received from the illegal activity. He also cites instances where the law has been changed in order for the wealthy to gain extra advantages over the poor, such as the 2005 bankruptcy law that permitted banks to charge higher interest on distressed debts, and removed the possibility of individuals to discharge student debts in the event of bankruptcy (Stiglitz, 2012 pp. 242-245). The implications of these alterations to the law are discussed in depth throughout his chapter on justice.

A third noteworthy point of Stiglitz's work is that of the need for 'collective action' (Stiglitz, 2012 p. 116) for society to develop. This occurs when all parts of society – the private and the public sectors – collaborate in order to make investments in the public goods enjoyed by society. However, the government's interest and ability to enforce the necessary laws and provide a basic public infrastructure is waning, and this comes to the detriment of social cohesion:

The more divided a society becomes in terms of wealth, the more reluctant the wealthy become to spend money on common needs. The rich don't need to rely on government for parks or education or medical care or personal security—they can buy all these things for themselves. In the process, they become more distant from ordinary people (Stiglitz, 2012 p. 117).

This observation is hugely reminiscent of the 'voluntary withdrawal' of the powerful noted earlier when we discussed SE [p. 140] and we are reminded of how this connects with the perpetuation of poverty among the lower and bottom classes.

5.3.d Oppression nullifies the conditions necessary for communal prosperity

In addition to poverty directly caused to a victim of oppression, it has been argued that oppressive societies as a whole nullify the conditions required for communal prosperity and effectively ensure poverty for all but the very powerful. In their compelling, 500 page tome: *Why nations fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty* (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012), Daron Acemoglu⁷³ and James A. Robinson⁷⁴ apply research from institutional economics, development economics and economic history to answer the question of development: why does it work in some communities, but not in others? Acemoglu and Robinson's thesis seems simple yet powerful: historical indicators suggest

⁷³ Daron Acemoglu is the Elizabeth and James Killian Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

⁷⁴ James Robinson is David Florence Professor of Government at Harvard University and a faculty associate at the Institute for Quantitative Social Science and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

that nations with 'inclusive' political and economic institutions are capable of sustained growth and prosperity, whereas nations with 'extractive' political and economic institutions are not. In their argument, 'inclusive' political institutions, 'make power broadly distributed in society and constrain its arbitrary exercise' (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012 p. 82) and create the foundation for inclusive economic institutions, which not only 'allow and encourage participation by the great mass of people in economic activities that make the best use of their talents and skills and that enables individuals to make the choices they wish' (p. 74) but also 'reduce the benefits the elites can enjoy... [because they] face competition in the marketplace and are constrained by the contracts and property rights of the rest of society' (p. 83).

In contrast, 'extractive' political institutions 'concentrate power in the hands of a narrow elite and place few constraints on the exercise of this power' (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012 p. 81), which makes way for extractive economic institutions that are 'designed to extract incomes and wealth from one subset of society to benefit a different subset' (p. 76). Once in place, inclusive institutions create a virtuous cycle; extractive institutions create a vicious cycle (pp. 430-431).

To support their assertions, the pair argue that the experiences of the USA, Western Europe and Japan – as compared to sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and China – in the last 200 years, show that inclusive institutions are linked to prosperity while extractive institutions are linked to failure and poverty (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012 pp. 428-429). Their strongest support for this view comes from natural experiments involving unnatural borders: i.e., a partition of a similar environment and initially similar human population by a political border. The border eventually comes to separate different economic and political institutions that, they maintain, create differences in wealth. Besides Nogales, USA, and Nogales, Mexico, (pp. 7-9), examples include the contrasts between North and South Korea (pp. 70-73) and between the former East and West Germany (p. 49).

We are interested in Acemoglu and Robinson's work because it aligns very closely with our understanding of oppression: for Acemoglu and Robinson to state that extractive institutions purposefully move wealth from one subset of society to another is akin to Wright stating that oppressive rulership exploits and keeps poor one group in order to meet the selfish interests of another. If we accept this parallel between extraction and oppression, then we also affirm their position on extraction/oppression and poverty:

The most common reason why nations fail today is because they have extractive institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012 p. 368).

However, while Wright's view of oppression focuses on the direct connection between oppressor and the victim, Acemoglu and Robinson's research shows an indirect connection between the oppressive action and communal prosperity: oppression and extraction nullifies the conditions that make communal prosperity possible and virtually ensures long-term poverty for the majority of the populace. The researchers reason:

1. Long-term growth can only come when the entire population has incentive to engage in productive economic activity (p. 430), which necessitates saving, investing and innovating (p. 372).
2. Only inclusive institutions create the framework that makes this incentive possible: secure private property, an unbiased system of law, a provision of public services that provides a level playing field, permission to open businesses and the right to choose careers. Extractive institutions remove any incentive because the population reasonably expects their output to be stolen, expropriated or unfairly taxed away (pp. 74-75, 372)
3. Some oppressive leaders choose to maintain extractive institutions because, despite the fact that inclusive institutions actually increase national prosperity, they fear losing some of their personal power and wealth if they are to allow more inclusive institutions (pp. 84, 86).
4. Therefore, the poor are poor because those who are in power chose to enable their poverty in order to maintain their own prosperity (p. 68).

Acemoglu and Robinson maintain that poverty is maintained through oppression – not only by a removal of wealth, but also by the removal of the incentive to generate wealth.⁷⁵

5.3.e Proposal: Oppression 'by intent' and 'by abandonment'

Wright defined Oppression as 'the exploitation of others by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor', and he saw it as the leading cause of poverty according to the Scriptures (Wright, 2004 p. 170). He noted five key areas that this is expressed: exploitation of the

⁷⁵ While their work has been criticised by some for making an over-reliance on case-studies with the danger of "ex-post rationalization" (Easterly, 2012), misreading some historical milestones (Fukuyama, 2012), and ignoring the impact of climate, geography and disease (Diamond, 2012), it would seem that the broad conclusions – as detailed above – are incontrovertible. The impact of extractive/oppressive regimes in causing poverty [accounting for as much as 50 per cent of national differences, in the eyes of Diamond] is valid.

socially weak; exploitation of the economically weak; exploitation of the ethnically weak; royal excess, corruption and abuse of power; and judicial corruption and false accusation. We see that this is supported by the World Bank and secular literature.

However, we see that there is much research to indicate that a large component of oppression is not just active, as expressed by Wright, but also passive. This happens when leaders who have effectively deserted sectors of a society, withdrawing their assistance and aid, cause poverty. To contemporize Wright's biblical model, we therefore propose that oppression should be understood as 'being adversely affected by the actions of someone more powerful, who uses their position for self-gain' and re-presented with two subthemes:

1. *Oppression by intent*: a direct and purposeful action by a more powerful party to exploit a weaker party.
2. *Oppression by abandonment*: the withdrawal [by the ruling authorities] of resources and assistance that a community should normally expect to receive.

We see that this proposal is reinforced by the World Bank data, faithful to broader biblical interpretation and supported by the wider research and is an accurate expression of one of the three universal causes of poverty.

5.4 Addendum: Corrosive Vulnerability

Wright and Keller argue that the chief causes of poverty do not work in isolation – each one adversely affects the vulnerability to another, leading to a progressive and descending plunge into the state of scarcity we recognize as poverty (Wright, 2004 p. 169, Keller, 2010 p. 34). In its fullness, this process creates the conditions necessary for what is frequently referred to as a poverty trap: a self-reinforcing position of poverty where escape is all but impossible and will likely require intervention from an external party. This concept is reasonably presented in both biblical and secular literature.⁷⁶ This section will therefore draw all aspects of our tri-causation model together

⁷⁶ The most recent Chronic Poverty Report by the Overseas Development Institute acknowledges the role that vulnerability plays in impoverishing people, and keeping them impoverished: 'Indeed, the negative shocks that hit individual people or families often stem from predictable and regular challenges in the lives of the poor, including their low status in power relations; their lack of access to markets, public services and infrastructure; as well as the discriminatory social norms and adverse inclusion they face each day. Tackling the risk of impoverishment implies, therefore, tackling the ways in which individual risks are generated by the meso- and macro-contexts in which the poor live.' See pp. 54-55 of SHEPHERD, A., SCOTT, L., MARIOTTI, C., KESSY, F., GAIHA, R., CORTA, L. D., HANIFNIA, K., KAICKER, N., LENHARDT, A., LWANGA-

with our earlier writing on the dynamics of becoming poor, to present a final synopsis of the process we have labelled *corrosive vulnerability*.

There are two key ideas that present themselves within this concept of corrosive vulnerability. The first is that of corrosion: that having one weakness or vulnerability tends to expose a person or group to further vulnerabilities. The second is the idea of vulnerability itself, and whether the presence of vulnerabilities for one party necessitates duties or responsibilities on another. Both ideas link closely with our work.

Jonathan Wolff, Professor of Philosophy at University College, London, analysed what it means to live a precarious life in *Disadvantage* (Wolff and De-Shalit, 2007). In its entirety, it is a fascinating and helpful contribution to the literature, but we are only capable of drawing out its most salient points here. Building upon the capability work of Sen and Nussbaum, Wolff and de-Shalit open by stating that their concern is not simply for the poor: as measured by a lack money (p. 5). Rather, their focus is on the 'disadvantaged', or those who 'lack genuine opportunities for secure functionings'⁷⁷ (section 2.1). Our major connection with Wolff and de-Shalit's notion of disadvantage is their observation that weaknesses tend to 'cluster' in the sense that some people are disadvantaged in several different respects and disadvantage may persist, and indeed accumulate, over time:

We call this '*dynamic clustering*', by which we mean both cases where a person 'accumulates' disadvantages over time, and the reproduction of disadvantage over generations. An example of dynamic clustering for a single individual would be a case where one is first unemployed, then becomes homeless, then loses one's friends, and then becomes very ill, and yet this does not all happen immediately but rather accumulates gradually over time. An example of cross-generation dynamic clustering would be a case where parents' disadvantage (e.g. drug addiction or teenage pregnancy) appears among their offspring (Wolff and De-Shalit, 2007 s7.2)

Along with dynamic clustering, Wolff and de-Shalit also identify the process of 'corrosive disadvantage', which they define as exposure to particular disadvantages, which then may cause harm to the offspring of the disadvantaged' (2007 s7.2). Together, these two terms resonate with

NTALE, C., SEN, B., SIJAPATI, B., STRAWSON, T., THAPA, G., UNDERHILL, H. & WILD, L. 2014. The chronic poverty report 2014-2015: the road to zero extreme poverty. London: Overseas Development Institute.

⁷⁷ The pair's understanding of functionings is similar to Nussbaum's, which we have already presented in section 3.3.a, but with three additions: Doing good to others; Living in a law-abiding fashion; Understanding the law. See s2.3.3 of WOLFF, J. & DE-SHALIT, A. 2007. *Disadvantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

our conviction that the causes of poverty do not work alone. Each disadvantage increases vulnerability to another, corroding a person's security and threatening their well-being.

Let us consider the biblical scenario whereby the death of a husband leaves an Israelite woman as a widow. In this hypothetical example, we will suggest that the death is unforeseeable and is therefore not a *disaster of negligence*. However, she is now found in a landless position, which we have seen makes her vulnerable to insufficient income [*failure by insufficient aptitude*]. The community's response, however, can strongly influence the impact of the man's death upon the now-widow. Should unscrupulous individuals choose to take advantage of her vulnerable position for self-gain [*oppression by intent*], they would escalate this into a *disaster of neglect* by refusing to allow the widow access to the gleanings of a nearby field – and her descent into irreversible poverty and likely starvation is now probable.

We see that the widow has experienced a life-changing event: the death of her husband. This itself will not cause her poverty, but it can be a triggering event. The problem is a loss of productive land and resource, meaning that she is unable to grow food or gain an income that she seeks. Finally, she is unable to purchase food or other necessities for survival. The widow has advanced through the levels of corrosive vulnerability and is now entrenched in poverty: the epitome of the גִּבּוֹר.

We see this process unfold in our World Bank data. A 33-year-old woman, born in Recife, where she lived until she was five, moved to the favela of Pina-Bode due to the flood of 1973. Daughter of an alcoholic father, the woman recounts that she had a very poor and difficult life. At seven years old she began to work collecting shellfish, to help maintain the family. She often had to resort to begging when she was unable to make enough money for the family to eat. She relates that along with these difficulties, she had to live with the abuse of her father, who returned drunk every day to the house, and:

‘...for whatever stupid thing would hit my mother. I hated to break up these fights. Everyone came in to break them up, and left having been hit. At the age of 18 I became pregnant from my first boyfriend, who, as soon as he knew I was pregnant, disappeared and I never heard from him again. Although I was pregnant, I continued to live with my mother. During this time, I began to work as a domestic worker with a family.

From there I began my pilgrimage from job to job, until the birth of my first daughter. After her birth, my life became just work and take care of her. During this time, my brothers, who were younger than me, began to work, and the financial situation improved a little. Still, life was a nightmare, due to the lack of peace inside the home. At 32 I became

pregnant for the second time. After the birth of my third daughter, I discovered that the father of my daughters was married and had four children. This, for me, was a huge deception. We separated and, even today, I don't want anyone else in my life. During this period, my father got a girlfriend that he went out with for 3 years. Later, when my mother found out, things in our house became hell, much bigger than they had been. My mother even received a death threat from the lover of my father. Then one day, during a fight, she killed my father. She fired on him when he was sleeping. Everything because of jealousy. This was definitely the worst thing that happened in my life.'

This interview represents how frequently the poor can experience multiple events that interconnect and compound the problem of poverty: a flood [disaster]; moving to a favela [increasing vulnerability to further disaster], an abusive father [victim of another's immoral attitude], desertion by the fathers of her first and third child [oppression by abandonment] and ruptured social connections [affected by the immoral attitude of others], amongst other negative events. What was needed in the woman's life, though it is admittedly a very complicated situation, was an opportunity to "re-track", or stop the continuance of vulnerability and potentially thwart the prolongation of poverty.

This helps to explain why the directives given in the Mosaic Law typically either resist oppression or incite opportunities for productive work – to help prevent the onset of further destitution. Surely this is the principle behind the creditor laws of Exodus 22, the fair judgement decrees of Leviticus 19, the kinsman-redeemer instructions of Leviticus 25, the gleaning rights of Deuteronomy 24, the denunciations of the corrupt landlords of Amos 5, and so forth: wherever there is exposed weakness, do not exacerbate it. Rather, in acts of justice appropriate for God's people, act to intervene and prevent the process of corrosive vulnerability from becoming entrenched.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have endeavoured to assess the commonalities between the voices of Wright, the World Bank data and the secular researchers. We have complemented and extended – and sometimes objected to – Wright's model, and using it as a point of reference we have proposed a revised framework of poverty causation that remains true to each of our three sources. We now conclude by affirming that a critical synthesis between Christopher J.H. Wright, the World Bank and contemporary scholarship on the aetiology of poverty would consist of:

- **Disaster:** the 'ongoing suffering as a result of an event that has caused great and often sudden adversity or distress.' This can arise in the form of [i] a *disaster by negligence*: where the impact is heightened because of a lack of forethought or prudence or, [ii] a

disaster by neglect: where the impact is heightened because of an inadequate response and rehabilitation.

- **Failure:** is ‘the inability to be engaged in fruitful work conducive to meeting one’s needs.’ This can arise in the form of either [i] *failure due to immoral attitude*: a moral stance averse to the discipline required for success, including but not limited to laziness and indolence; substance abuse and destructive addiction or, [ii] *failure due to insufficient aptitude*: a lack of access to sufficient knowledge, skills, tools, technology and physical resources to render one fit for productive work.
- **Oppression:** ‘being adversely affected by the actions of someone more powerful, who uses their position for self-gain.’ This can arise in the form of [i] *oppression by intent*: a direct and purposeful action by a more powerful party to exploit a weaker party, or, [ii] *oppression by abandonment*: the withdrawal [by the ruling authorities] of resources and assistance that a community should normally expect to receive.

Furthermore, we affirm the dynamics of becoming poor, which we have labelled the process of *corrosive vulnerability*, meaning ‘the understanding that one adverse event of oppression, disaster or failure increases the vulnerability to another event of the same or alternate kind.’

In the light of these changes, we see it helpful to graphically present our understanding in a redefined model of tri-causation in the form of a three-way Venn diagram, as presented below in Figure 7:

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a critical synthesis between Christopher J.H. Wright, the World Bank and contemporary scholarship on the aetiology of poverty. From the outset, we recognized that there are gaps in the literature with regards to biblical development: Myers acknowledged that there is a current lack of any strong case studies, academic appraisals, PhD investigations or evidence-based research in the field. We sought to meet this gap by conducting original research that utilised both scholarship of the Scriptures and an engagement with leading secular research. We see that our study presents a valuable contribution to churches, para-church organizations – and potentially governments – who are seeking to address the real needs of individuals and families in our communities and communities around the world, and who wish to do so in a scripturally supported, academically robust and practically effective manner.

6.1 Findings

The subsequent sections will review how our key questions were addressed and answered across the span of our thesis. It will demonstrate the systematic nature of our approach from beginning to end and show how each section contributed to the answering of our key research question.

6.1.a Preliminary

Our first research question required us to investigate the claims of Wright as presented in his biblical model for understanding poverty causation, and it was the focus of Chapter 2. We found that Wright's view is that the Bible records the causes of poverty as being: *natural causes* [the result of living in a fallen world in which things go wrong for no reason]; *laziness* [laziness and squandering can indeed lead to impoverishment, whereas hard work is often conducive to economic prosperity]; and *oppression* [the exploitation by those whose own selfish interests are served by keeping others poor]. From our reading of his texts, we concluded that Wright's observations were valid and could be both sustained and polished by further examining the Hebrew language and the work of other biblical commentators. However, we also included a number of texts that were seemingly missing from Wright's presentation: Exodus 16:3 and 22:26-27; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 24 and 28:15-68; see Joshua 1. This was an important process, as our thesis rests on the assumption that the biblical model presented by Wright is a credible model upon which to build a contemporary understanding.

Our second research question asked us to ascertain the causes of poverty according to some leading contemporary, secular scholarship and it was the focus of Chapter 3. We examined four leading perspectives: the MA was focused on monetary outcomes and used financial capacity as a proxy for well-being and thus a lack in this area caused poverty; the CA was focused on an individual's ability to live the kind of life they valued and used a decrease in capabilities as a cause of poverty. SE was more concerned with relative power dynamics within a society and used an individual's broken ability to relate to others in society as a cause of poverty. PM sought to return the command of discussion and decision-making back to those most affected by engaging with and learning from the perspectives of poor people, and offered a variety of causes that closely resembled a summary of the prior three.

We concluded that each approach is based upon varying philosophical assumptions of what is of importance to humanity and to a just society. Yet their inherent diversity, inconsistencies and contradictions did not discourage us from pursuing our goal: rather, it heartened us. We saw amidst the multiplicity of accounts the possibility of a greater framework in which they all fit, and anticipated that this could be found in our synthesis.

Our third research question required us to present the crucial meeting point between the biblical model and real empirical evidence and this was the focus of Chapter 4. We sought to know whether the experiences of the poor would support or refute Wright's assertions. To answer this, we used data from the 1999 Brazilian National Report, prepared to inform the 2000/01 WDR. Using this qualitative data, obtained from group discussions and interviews with participants in three Brazilian locations, we conducted a Framework Synthesis on Wright's model. The results of our synthesis show that on the whole, Wright's model was reflected in the experiences of the people interviewed: from the 48 interviews, we found a total of 175 references to the causes of poverty. From the 8 group discussions, we found a total of 27 references.

The results from our synthesis showed that there were:

- 52 references to Natural Causes [29.5 per cent]
- 4 references to Laziness [2 per cent]
- 120 references to Oppression [68.5 per cent]

However, we saw the emergence of 17 new subthemes that were not evident in Wright's model. These largely came under three significant headings: educational opportunities, employment and access to adequate markets. Wanting to review these emerging themes, we conducted a new NVivo query. We found a new aggregate of 253 references to the causes of poverty within the 48 interviews. From the 8 group discussions, we found a total of 53 references.

Our second round of queries showed:

- 74 references to Natural Causes [33.3 per cent]
- 11 to Laziness [3.1 per cent].
- 120 references to poverty caused by Oppression [34.7 per cent]
- 101 references to an issue connected with income/expenditure ratio, skills, education or employment [28.9 per cent]

From our results, we saw that Wright's model could be – and perhaps needed to be – redrawn if it were to have any authority in our times: 'natural causes' needed to consider the frequent "non-natural" triggers of the events; 'laziness' in itself perhaps needed less weight and more attention on the inability to work productively; and 'oppression' needed a larger emphasis on the onset of poverty caused when leaders desert sections of a community.

6.1.b Major

The aetiology of poverty

Chapter 5 drew upon all we had achieved in the previous chapters and sought to synthesize Wright's model, the World Bank data and contemporary scholarship. By integrating the three fields, we established a coherent model of poverty causation that remained faithful to the biblical literature, would be evident in the World Bank data, and engage confidently with contemporary scholarship in both theology and the social sciences.

We have systematically re-connected our findings back to the wider body of knowledge. Drawing from biblical literature, the World Bank data and fields as diverse as philosophy, public policy, legal theory and political economics we concluded that a critically synthesized model of poverty causation consists of the following three elements:

- **Disaster:** the ‘ongoing suffering as a result of an event that has caused great and often sudden adversity or distress.’

This can arise in the form of either:

- i. a *disaster of negligence*: where the impact is heightened because of a lack of forethought or prudence, or
- ii. a *disaster of neglect*: where the impact is heightened because of an inadequate response and rehabilitation.

- **Failure:** is ‘the inability to be engaged in fruitful work conducive to meeting one’s needs.’

This can arise in the form of either

- i. *failure due to immoral attitude*: a moral stance averse to the discipline required for success, including but not limited to laziness and indolence; substance abuse and destructive addiction, or
- ii. *failure due to insufficient aptitude*: a lack of access to sufficient knowledge, skills, tools, technology and physical resources to render one fit for productive work.

- **Oppression:** ‘being adversely affected by the actions of someone more powerful, who uses their position for self-gain.’

This can arise in the form of either

- i. *oppression by intent*: a direct and purposeful action by a more powerful party to exploit a weaker party, or
- ii. *oppression by abandonment*: the withdrawal [by the ruling authorities] of resources and assistance that a community should normally expect to receive.

Furthermore, we affirmed the dynamics of becoming poor, which we have labelled the process of *corrosive vulnerability*, meaning ‘the understanding that one adverse event of oppression, disaster or failure increases the vulnerability to another event of the same or alternate kind.

The model above is our original contribution to this body of knowledge. It represents our contribution of evidence-based, doctoral-level research to the field of biblical development. It expresses an understanding of poverty causation that, to our knowledge, would transcend time and cultural gaps and be both universally applicable and contextually relevant.

6.2 Implications

We see that there are a number of areas for which our research has significant implications. Could our model connect with the contrasting topic of human flourishing, and possibly be used to inform the set of capabilities desired by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000)? If we have discerned that disaster, failure and oppression lead to poverty, could the reverse notions – perhaps 'security', 'productivity' and 'liberty' – be three key and universal capabilities required for human flourishing [as these are the capabilities affected by our trio of causes]?

Of course, the Bible is replete with such a related vision of human flourishing. The Hebrew root word שָׁלֵם means to 'be complete, sound': a state of wholeness and unity, and restored relationship (Harris et al., 1980 #2401, Strong, 2009 H7999). It is seen by Harris et al. (1980) to be one of the most theologically significant words in the entirety of the Old Testament, and provides perhaps the finest description of human flourishing we have in the biblical texts. Though predominantly being translated as 'peace' – which in our English understanding is usually equated with an absence of strife or war – the Hebrew שָׁלֵם should be seen in the light of completeness, wholeness, harmony and fulfilment. Functional and unimpaired relationships, as well as accomplishment in one's undertakings are also signals of שָׁלֵם. In almost two-thirds of mentions, שָׁלֵם describes the state of fulfilment that is a result of God's presence.

Likewise, צָלַח means to accomplish satisfactorily what is intended (Harris et al., 1980 #1917, Strong, 2009 H6743), and occurs 81 times in 64 verses of the NASB. Frequently translated as 'prosper', it is used to describe the reign of Solomon [1 Chronicles 29:23] and it is the promise given to Joshua, should he stay faithful in thought and action to the book of the law [Joshua 1:8]. Likewise, the Book of Psalms reminds us that he who delights in the law of the Lord will 'prosper' in all that

he does [Psalm 1:3]. It is closely connected with the idea of engaging in fruitful and productive activity.

Finally, the Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּט, which is frequently translated 'justice' or 'ordinance' (Harris et al., 1980 #2443c, Strong, 2009 H4941) is connected with the idea of fair and just leadership, governance and judiciary. In Leviticus 19:15 we see an indication that a ruler acting justly would act strictly according to the established law without showing preference for either the rich or the poor. The concept of relationship was also essential to מִשְׁפָּט, as it was a judge's responsibility to restore the relational harmony in a situation or community in order to promote equity in the community (Malchow, 1996). We see an contrasting connection between human flourishing under rule of מִשְׁפָּט and human impoverishment under the reign of oppression.

Much could be said about the biblical vision of human flourishing, but we understand that this is not the focus of this particular thesis. Nevertheless, it would seem apt to recognize that the biblical goal is to direct attention towards a positive outcome: moving humanity towards [or back to?] a place of שְׁלֵמָה [completeness, wholeness, harmony and fulfilment]; towards a place of צִלְחָה [successful endeavours] and towards מִשְׁפָּט [rulership that emphasised just and harmonious relationships] – all of which seem to resonate with moving people away from disaster, failure and oppression [and towards security, productivity and liberty]. This is perhaps most poetically communicated in Isaiah's vision of a future Godly kingdom, in Isaiah 11, which envisions human flourishing to include, among other features, harmony with God [11:2-3], unbiased justice and rule [11:3], a commitment to justice for the poor [11:4], productive work that is not susceptible to ruin [11:6] and lives that are no longer in danger of harm [11:8].

The second, and more practical, implication is the education of churches and community groups who are responding to requests from individuals for financial assistance. Members who present as "poor" and in need of resource frequently approach these groups, and with typically limited finances the group must make a decision on how much and in what way they can support the individual. Frequently, poverty assessment techniques are aimed at understanding *how much* someone is in poverty, not *why* they are experiencing hardship. Likewise, frequently the response is based on the

emotion attached to hearing an appeal for help, not on a systematic and intelligent [yet still compassionate] investigation of the situation. We see that the development of an initial assessment that questions the cause of their poverty, not just the manifestation of it, could be beneficial for those responsible for making these decisions. Such an assessment could help identify the initial triggers – disaster, failure, oppression or a combination – and direct help at targeting the problem at the source.⁷⁸

Further to this point is the education of church and community leaders on how to identify pre-poverty those who are vulnerable to neediness. By being aware of the ‘clustering of disadvantages’ phenomenon, church leaders could be equipped to recognize [or better yet, help people to recognize it for themselves] and offer opportunities to reduce these disadvantages [such as rent-support for newly unemployed single parents] in order to help prevent a slide into poverty. Education and training in practical life matters [finances, resume writing, banking, insurance etc.] could be available through churches as a part of a poverty-prevention mandate, rather than holding on to a poverty-response mind set. Admittedly, many churches and groups are already engaged in such worthwhile endeavours, and our research could help encourage such efforts and perhaps help refine or refocus their labour into areas that show the most benefit.

We also see implications for resource allocation for large-scale anti-poverty programs. Much of the focus of anti-poverty programs is deciding *who* should be targeted and not *what* should be targeted, which we believe to be a mistake. We see that it could more profitable to avert the onset of poverty in the first instance than to provide assistance only after someone has fallen into poverty. We could therefore be looking for scenarios that create vulnerability and proactively address those circumstances – rather than waiting for people to fall into the category we have pre-assigned to be “poverty” and then devising plans to come to their assistance. Stemming the generation of new poverty should be an equally important goal of poverty reduction.

Finally, an assessment tool could be developed to monitor a charity or group’s effectiveness in targeting the causes of poverty [not just the expressions of it] and this tool could help donors, leaders and philanthropists make informed decisions to place their financial support behind

⁷⁸ Anecdotal evidence from the author’s own experience in a pastoral setting suggests that educating practitioners with a framework of poverty causation such as this is potentially a very helpful practice.

activities that have [or have the potential to have] the biggest impact in preventing and reducing poverty. We see that this could come in the form of a survey, where key indicators of poverty causation are presented and organisations would identify the methods they use to engage with these indicators. This would further bolster the impact of charity reviewers such as Give Well and Charity Navigator, who endeavour to provide real feedback on the impact of donor support on various charities.

6.3 Limitations

We would be overconfident to suggest that our thesis is not limited in a number of ways. Our first recognition is the enormous breadth of the topic. We have endeavoured to present a theology thesis that draws not only upon the more traditional fields of biblical theology, Old Testament studies and Hebrew, but also sought to interact at times with the fields of economics, ethics, justice, philosophy, public policy, legal theory and political economics. This enormity of reach has been a colossal challenge and in hindsight perhaps would be approached differently if the opportunity was offered again. Any study that encompasses so many fields of knowledge runs the risk of superficiality. We recognize that it can be extremely difficult to adequately engage with the body of knowledge within each field, and at times we have had to stop short of presenting a more comprehensive and/or authoritative interaction. However, we believe that the poverty discussion needs to be opened up to all the relevant knowledge that we possess and view this as perhaps an additional and encouraging step in connecting Christian thinking with the social sciences.

We have already recognized the limitations incurred when conducting a secondary analysis [5.3.a] and this is simply a reaffirmation. A more ideal situation would be to design and conduct qualitative research that would suit our purposes exactly, but this was not possible given the scope of this thesis. This would have also allowed us to use the most recent data rather than relying on data that is now 16 years old. We recognize that this could be considered problematic, though we maintain that the quality of the data likely exceeded what we could have achieved ourselves and that – if our hunch that our findings represent truths that stand outside of time is true – then we should expect to see similar results regardless of when the survey was conducted.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Though the scope for future research is enormous, we would be excited to see our research developed further in two specific ways. It would be beneficial to conduct a similar piece of research using original, primary data that has been specifically prepared for a study of this nature. This research could be cross-sectional and include sites in both developed and developing communities, or in communities that might seem to present a leaning towards a particular vulnerability: a town vulnerable to climatic disasters; a rural area with difficult access to markets; a city with noticeably high levels of corruption. This would help us confirm the validity of our results, as well as seeing the impact of these vulnerabilities and their interaction with each other.

Furthermore, we would like to see the development and testing of an assessment tool as discussed in section 6.2. We would be interested to see how this could help practitioners identify and help vulnerable people and how well it could be used to respond to individual poverty. In a manner similar to how Carroll et al. (2013) sophisticated their approach through application and refinement, we see that it would be profitable for our framework to be developed in such a manner.

Finally, we see that there are a number of questions that arise concerning how our findings interact with the literature. For instance, how would a biblical model of poverty engage with the questions set out by Laderchi et al. (2003)? Though disaster and failure are well-covered aspects of poverty, how could we further strengthen the empirical link between oppression and poverty [adding weight to the work of Boone (1996)]? In the light of the recent and growing interest in inequality, what further research could connect rising inequality with oppression and poverty [adding weight to work of Stiglitz (2012)]? These are but a number of research questions that come to mind at the conclusion of our work.

Ultimately, we see that this paper could be of significant importance for Christians who seek to engage in poverty reduction activities in a way that is both intellectually supported and true to their faith. This thesis does not claim to have answered the problem of poverty, nor has it sought to present an overly ambitious declaration that an end to poverty is indeed in sight. But this thesis does claim that the Christian God has an interest in the well-being of His creation and He has disclosed to us in His word ways to understand, prevent and respond to poverty of all kinds. Our original contribution to knowledge has been to examine such guidance and, through the use of the

social sciences and empirical knowledge, re-present it in a way that addresses the concerns of the 21st century while still remaining faithful to the biblical revelation.

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APPENDIX I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM BRAZIL NATIONAL REPORT

1. Executive Summary

This document provides a synthesis of a Participatory Poverty Assessment in Urban Brazil. The study was conducted in ten sites located in three Brazilian cities: Recife, Santo André and Itabuna. It involved discussions with 632 poor individuals who participated in discussion groups and/or individual interviews. The fieldwork gathered information on three sets of issues. These include the following:

- Well-being and trends over time (including issues relative to security, risk, vulnerability, social cohesion, social exclusion, opportunity and mobility, and crime and conflict),
- Priority problems and concerns
- Institutional Analysis (e.g. trust and confidence in, and ratings of the effectiveness of different institutions, including governmental, NGO and market), and Changes in Gender Relations at the Household and Community Levels.

The analysis focuses on :

- Results that cut across groups and sites
- Variations from site to site
- Variations across groups, particularly gender differences
- Unique/ specific results at a particular site

Six methods were used to analyze issues related to well-being. These included the following: ranking; scoring; focus group discussion; trend analysis; cause-impact analysis; individual case studies.

People's perception of well-being showed significant variance across the groups and sites. It is possible, however, to identify a number of commonalities in the themes of well-being, quality of life, and living conditions. People tended to equate poverty with powerlessness and to relate well-being to security. Security is associated in the reports with a variety of factors including employment and steady income; access to food; good health and having access to health services, and also land tenure and homeownership.

The poor are also regarded as vulnerable and at a greater risk because of their exposure to an unhealthy environment, to violence and crimes and to landslides and floods.

The households in which one of the members have a steady job or have access to patronage ties are regarded as more secure than others. The factors that trigger personal or family crises leading to more deprivation are job dismissals, illnesses, deaths of parents, breakdown of marriages, and evictions from squatted land. Although some people are better able to cope with these situations, some households e.g. families headed by women and the elderly - are structurally ill-equipped to cope with these shocks. These include disproportionately families headed by women and the elderly. This structural vulnerability of women and the elderly, however, is compensated to a great extent by the role played by the extended family.

For most people insecurity has increased. This is attributed to the rise in unemployment rates and to the explosion of violence and crimes in the communities. The perception of these issues varies significantly among discussion groups within sites and across sites.

A paradox emerges in the discussions in the various groups of poor people. While it is generally acknowledged that 'the poor is getting poorer and the rich is getting richer', in the actual discussion of specific categories the groups – in particular of young men and women -, they tend to agree that there have been great improvements in well-being. Most groups tended to argue that poverty was diminishing. And this is associated with a pattern of incremental improvements in the infrastructure and services in the communities that thus evolve into fully serviced poor neighborhoods.

Unemployment is held to be the most important cause of poverty, followed by lack of schooling and sanitation. The impacts of poverty, according to the groups, ranged from undernourishment and health problems to personal distress and breakdown of interpersonal relations. However, a second paradox can be found here. Many statements and individual profiles presented in this study make clear the co-existence of low wages (and pensions) and poverty.

Concerning the conditions that would enable the poor to move out of poverty, the groups virtually reached a consensus on two factors: access to education and to employment. However, people feel that opportunities for economic and social mobility have, in general, because of the rise in unemployment. But this general perception coexists with a view that several avenues of social mobility are still open. With respect to changes in well-being categories over time, most groups agreed that the categories of the poorest of the poor and the rich have not changed significantly over time.

Government is generally held responsible for the people's lack of opportunities for improving their lives. Government provided services such as sanitation, basic schooling, infrastructure work and public health care are regarded as pre-conditions for the people to improve their living conditions. The groups feel that they can progress if these are made available. However, many statements were made suggesting not only frustration and disbelief in government's response to demands but also a pattern of dependency on the government.

The most important problems faced by the communities in Brazil are, according to the groups, unemployment and violence/public safety. Poor housing conditions and the lack of sewage were also cited as pressing problems, along with poor service in health care.

The centrality of violence and safety as issues in all sites was a non-anticipated finding. This is all the more remarking because the poor is not generally viewed as victims, but mainly as the perpetrators of violence and crime. It contradicts a widely accepted view that other issues are of more concern to the poor such as better housing and health care and access to food.

Different groups within the community experience different problems and prioritize problems differently. Drugs were elected as a key issue in groups of women, but not in groups of men. This concern can be explained by the fact that women are affected indirectly by the drug problem when members of the family are addicts or dealers. Men tended to prioritize police brutality because they are more likely to be victims of the police than women. Similarly, sewage was a priority for men because it is regarded as men's responsibility.

Men and women prioritized health and schools equally. However, the women's discussion of health and schooling issues are more comprehensive than the men's discussions. Women are more involved with the children's education, and also are better educated than men in overall.

Most problems are thought to get better in the future with the exception of violence, drugs and unemployment - the problems about which the poor also feel they have no capacity to solve. Most problems related to the provision of services or infrastructure are expected to improve. However, there is gender differentiation in the perception of these problems. In most accounts, unemployment is expected to worsen by the men and to improve by women.

Overall, the groups showed a surprising skepticism in their capacity to solve problems by themselves. In a very few cases the groups agreed that the problem being discussed could be solved by the community without external assistance.

Surprisingly, among the most important institutions cited by the poor, most were governmental institutions. The Catholic Church was not only ranked as the most important institution but also the one with the highest rate of approval. The Catholic Church was judged to be very important because it would provide spiritual assistance, help solve emergencies and even provide financial assistance.

The neighborhood associations were also regarded as crucial institutions in virtually all sites. They were considered important because they are seen as channels for the expression of the community demands, and because they are very helpful both in time of crisis and in day-to-day life.

The Police was the third most cited institution and was almost unanimously regarded as the worst institution. Notwithstanding the little confidence trust they put in the Police, they regarded it as a key institution in terms of need. In fact, it was ranked first in terms of the institution, which urgently needs improving in six of the ten sites. Legislatures were rated very low while individual politicians and mayors were positively evaluated.

Overall, men and women stressed criteria relative to both efficiency and trust in their evaluation of institutions. However, most participants felt unable to differentiate between these two aspects. However, there were significant gender differences between men and women's assessment of institutions. Women tended to emphasize respect while men stressed efficiency criteria.

People want to have control over the institutions that they consider worst in terms of performance. Control is not pursued as a means in itself. Control is required to improve performance only in poor-performance institutions.

Friends, families and neighbors were cited much less frequently than was anticipated. This is a striking finding and underscores the weakening of primary ties in the urban communities.

The most striking aspect of the institutional evaluation is that, despite the ubiquitous criticisms of government, many governmental programs – e. g. community health programs and food distribution schemes - were very positively evaluated.

Many testimonies of people who improved their well-being overtime include references to a pension. This finding is consistent with the fact that there are no indications in the accounts of poor people that poverty is associated with old age. In fact, older people tend to enjoy relations were stressed in an impressive number of cases.

The domestic division of labor appears then to be moving in the direction of more equality, or more precisely less inequality, as a result of broader changes in the labor market. The key process underlying the changes in gender relations has to do thus with the structural transformation in the labor market. Two trends were reported. Women have been increasingly incorporated in labor markets and jobs have become increasingly difficult to get by men.

A variety of both formal institutions and informal social networks were reported, particularly in the older and more consolidated communities. There seems to be a correlation between social capital and the level of consolidation of the communities (quality of infrastructure; improvements).

A pattern of change was identified in gender relations whereby the women have extended horizontally their responsibilities rather than by replacing old responsibilities by new ones. Men engage in 'women activities' only when the women are unable to do the job because of sickness or emergency situations. The key process underlying the changes in gender relations has to do thus with the structural transformation in the labor market. Women have been increasingly incorporated in labor markets as a result of their better access to education and because the sectors that typically employ men – construction industry and manufacturing –, are in decline, while the service industry, which employ more women, is expanding apace. Despite the changes it is generally regarded as a men's responsibility to be the family provider.

Women tend to play a more significant role than men do in the decision making process in the community. In the ten sites, five community leaders were female and many women were actively involved in the struggles of the community.

Women appear to be most vulnerable group in society as far as violence is concerned. Aggressions are much more prevalent against women than against men both within the communities and within the household. Women's access to the judicial system has improved significantly.

APPENDIX II: THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS / DISCUSSION GROUPS

THEMES AND SUBTHEMES	NO. OF SOURCES	NO. OF REFERENCES	REPRESENTATIVE COMMENT
Natural Causes	10	51	
Attacks by Disease-Carrying Insects	1	1	'...many times run the risk of being bit by the barbeiro insect (carrier of chagas)...'
Attacks by animals	1	1	'She thinks that because of the shacks, there are people who are bit by snakes that enter in the cracks in the doors.'
Crop Failure or Disease	3	3	'He considers that the main problem of the communities of Itabuna and this problem is generated by the problem of the plague in the cocoa.'
Death of Spouse	1	1	'Then I widowed and returned to domestic work, in order to raise my children.'
Lack of Food	6	12	'She stated that she had a very tough childhood, since she starved many times.'
Maternal Death or Abandonment	3	3	'According to her, the most tragic fact of her life was her mother's death, because she had to work in order to survive.'

Parental Death or Abandonment	4	4	'From a very poor family, she became an orphan at the age of 7.'
Paternal Death or Abandonment	4	8	'When she was nine years old, she started to work in the local agriculture of cane, corn, and beans to help her mother because her father was dead. She explains "my father was poisoned when I was seven years old. I do not remind of him. We had to plant to survive..."'
Property Damage by Flood	1	1	'...there was a flood in Recife and we lost everything. The house was underwater. The rain flooded all the furniture, the refrigerator and the stove. We all were on the street, me and my family.'
Property damage by Fire	1	1	'Beyond many other problems that I have suffered in my marriage, I would say that nothing has been worse then [sic] the fire in my house.'
Sickness and Disability to Self	5	6	'I quit because I had a health problem and the doctor told me to stop with the cleaning activities. I was unemployed...'
Sickness or Disability to Child	3	4	'When I had thought my life was going well, I had to stop to work to take care of my children that had become epileptic... this was the worst thing that could had happened in my life.'
Sickness or Disability to Spouse	2	3	'Now what worries me in my husband's sickness. He had a stroke. Life is very hard.'
Vulnerable community geography	1	4	'The main problems that the community face are the sliding

			hillsides...'
Laziness	3	4	
Debt	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Gambling	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Living Beyond Personal Means	1	1	'About the causes and consequences of poverty he considers that one of the main causes is the extravagance, in which people do not think about the next day.'
Lack of Consciousness	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Oppression	16	120	
Economic Exploitation	5	6	
High Housing Costs	3	4	'The rents went up and people would come here to the favela.'
Voluntary Exclusion by the Wealthy	2	2	'In regards to categories of well-being, she identifies that in Nova Califórnia, those who live better take care of their own lives, and do

			not think of helping out others.'
Ethnic Exploitation	0	0	
Governing Exploitation	16	77	
Fraud by Public Official	1	1	'I had the money, but President Collor confiscated it and I could get only 50,000 out of the account.'
Insecure Property Rights	1	2	'According to him, one of the most relevant facts of his teenage, was the invasion of the land that today is Vila União. At that time, he stopped studying for this cause and lived three months in a hut made of wood and plastic canvas.'
Lack of Access to Clean Water	4	9	'...and water that only comes once every 8 days, at times once every 15 days. "it has been over a month since it rained"'
Lack of Access to Electricity	2	2	'Now we are striving with the electrical company to provide the electricity hook-ups are really confused, 6 or 7 in the same connection. When it rains the power goes off...'
Lack of Access to Health Care	6	10	'He also thinks that the precarious services offered by the health clinic is another important problem affecting the community.'
Lack of Garbage Collection	4	7	'In her perception, the problem that is currently bothering the community is the garbage, and she explains "the garbage is in front of my house... I pray for the people here to become conscious about it...

			I pray for them to find a solution... it is too bad... my house is small to all the people living there and with the garbage... it is rotten food, dead animals... it is a shame...
Lack of Sewage and Sanitation	10	20	'...this street was full of sewage.'
Lack of Street Paving	4	5	'The streets were not paved and full of holes.'
Maltreatment or Disinterest by Public Officials	9	17	'...the politicians abuse and use their knowledge to take advantage of those that have not this knowledge.'
Political Corruption	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Poor Redistribution of National Wealth	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Unreliable Public Transport	2	2	'In evaluating the services in the community she says that the buses take too long to come and it makes people come late in their daily activities.'
Judicial Exploitation	8	14	
Lack of Police Protection	8	14	'Here we do not have police patrols, I live locked up at home, watching television, sewing or taking care of my grandson.'

Social Exploitation	12	23	
Death of Child	1	1	'Then I started doing sewing work. I have been doing this for 12 years now. I stopped when my daughter died. A rapist killed her at the age of 4 years and 8 months.'
Fear of Property Theft	4	6	'In her opinion, the community offers no safety, particularly at night, when the residents do not leave home fearing the invasion of criminals.'
Fear of Violence	5	11	'In her opinion, the community doesn't offer security; people cannot leave their houses at night and children cannot play in the road because of mugging, aggressive behavior of underdogs, and shootings.'
Lack of Respect	2	2	'Inhumanity of the big businessmen.'
Lack of Social Cohesion	3	3	[Listed by a Discussion Group]

APPENDIX III: REVISED THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS / DISCUSSION GROUPS

NEW SUBTHEMES	NO. OF SOURCES	NO. OF REFERENCES	REPRESENTATIVE COMMENT
Childhood Labour	6	17	'At 11 years old he worked making charcoal, and at the butchers, selling boxes of meat to homes.'
Cost of Education	2	2	'Children are a problem, basically because if you want a better education you have to pay for it.'
General Underemployment	7	12	'Many in the community live without a regular job, and there are many who "get a bit here and a bit there, but, that don't have any secure work.'
General Unemployment	13	30	'...unemployment, which is the primary reason people suffer from want.'
High Family Expenses	2	2	'I do not have [sic] how to provide things to this people... that came to live here... I do not have privacy ... I already live with difficulty and I still have to deal with this situation... recently more 6 nephews came from the backlands because otherwise they will die in hunger... they are very little... I paid R\$ 50,00 to a private driver to pick them up ...the wife does not understand ... it was a motive for fighting with her ... there is one sister of her in my house that does not get along with me... what I earn is just to feed them.'
Insufficient Skill for Employment	2	2	'Nevertheless he thinks that the labor market is very restrictive, particularly for him, that did not go to university.'
Lack of Demand for Skills or Produce	4	5	'The business have fallen a lot, because of this unemployment wave. I used to sell 250 beers in a weekend, today it is barely 50. 150 hot-dogs before, now just around

			50. It is the crisis.'
Lack of Educational Opportunities	10	16	'After that, my whole life has been work...already in my infancy I lived in an environment which did not give me the freedom to study.'
Lack of Good Educational Opportunities	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Lack of Luck	1	1	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Lack of Political Involvement by the Poor	1	1	'We vote badly, don't monitor, and do not demand our rights.'
Low income	9	15	'I took pictures in marriages, batizados, and birthday parties. however, the money I make is not enough to eat decently and to pay the rent.'
Substance Abuse by Other	3	4	[Listed by a Discussion Group]
Substance Abuse of Parent	2	2	'Daughter of an alcoholic father, Silvana recounts that she had a very poor and difficult life.'
Substance Abuse of Spouse	1	1	'However, it was a very difficult phase in her marriage. "My husband became alcoholic... we lost the kiosk ..."'

Family Breakdown	5	9	'[She] was born in Recife, in the Torre neighborhood, where she lived to the age of 6. She was forced to move to the Entra a Pulso favela because of serious family disagreements.'
Insufficient Housing	9	12	'In this phase I had to depend on other people shelter and slept on the floor, me and my child.'